

Matthew I-XI

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THE PEOPLE'S BIBLE:

DISCOURSES UPON HOLY SCRIPTURE.

BY

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"SPRINGDALE ABBEY," "THE INNER LIFE OF CHRIST," "AD CLERUM,"
"THE ARK OF GOD," "APOSTOLIC LIFE," "TYNE CHYLDE,"
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Volumes XVIII. and XIX. contains much of the matter which has already appeared under the title of "THE INNER LIFE OF CHRIST."

The Annotations in this volume, as in all the others, represent the best available criticism.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW.

Matthew i. 1-17.

1. The book of the generation (a Hebrew form) of Jesus Christ (Jesus was a common name, but not *Christ*), the son of David (the most popular of his names), the son of Abraham.
2. Abraham begat Isaac ; and Isaac begat Jacob ; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren ;
3. And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar (quite exceptional to find the name of a woman in a Jewish genealogy) ; and Phares begat Esrom ; and Esrom begat Aram ;
4. And Aram begat Aminadab ; and Aminadab begat Naasson (the brother-in-law of Aaron) : and Naasson begat Salmon (probably one of the two spies saved by Rahab) ;
5. And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab (the harlot of Jericho) ; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth (a heathen Moabitess) ; and Obed begat Jesse ;
6. And Jesse begat David the king ; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias (the last woman's name in the genealogy) ;
7. And Solomon begat Roboam ; and Roboam begat Abia ; and Abia begat Asa ;
8. And Asa begat Josaphat ; and Josaphat begat Joram ; and Joram begat Ozias (the Uzziah of the Old Testament) ;
9. And Ozias begat Joatham ; and Joatham begat Achaz ; and Achaz begat Ezekias :
10. And Ezekias begat Manasses ; and Manasses begat Amon ; and Amon begat Josias ;
11. And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon :
12. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel ; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel ;
13. And Zorobabel begat Abiud ; and Abiud begat Eliakim ; and Eliakim begat Azor ;
14. And Azor begat Sadoc ; and Sadoc begat Achim ; and Achim begat Eliud ;
15. And Eliud begat Eleazar ; and Eleazar begat Matthan ; and Matthan begat Jacob ;
16. And Jacob begat Joseph (descended from David through Rehoboam

and Solomon) the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

17. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations ; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations ; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations. (So divided merely to help the memory. The division is arbitrary.)

CHRIST'S RELATION TO THE PAST.

THIS is a genealogical tree. One sometimes wonders why such lists of names are in a book which is specifically known as a revelation of the will and love of God. Who cares to read a genealogical table? Most of the names are unknown, many of them are difficult to pronounce, and once read, who can remember a solitary verse of the whole catalogue? Yet the names are here, and if here, there must be some purpose in the record. God is a severe economist of space as of everything else : he does not throw anything away, though there may be wastefulness here and there, according to our present incomplete notions of things. Fasten your attention upon this genealogical tree for the purpose of studying it with a view of finding out whether the matter ends within this formal tree, or whether it does not become a tree that fills the whole earth and heaven, yea, and spreads itself over all the spaces and liberties of the universe.

The great mistake which you have to overcome in your Christian studies is, that Jesus Christ lived within a few days only, and then ceased to live upon the earth. In only a very narrow sense is that true. I am interested for the time being in learning the peculiar circumstances under which my Lord's ministry was conducted. I am not unwilling to listen to pictorial descriptions of the scenery through which he passed : it gives me but momentary delight to know whether he spoke in the sunrise or in the sunset, yet I like to hear the rhetoricians' beautiful way of setting forth the surrounding circumstances of his ministry. But Jesus Christ was *not a figure on a landscape* : he was and is the life of all living things. Paint the landscape when you are going to give some hint of mighty discoverers or warriors or men of local and perishable renown ; the landscape may be more important than such men themselves were within the immediate lines of their earthly history ; but in the case of Jesus Christ I want nothing but Christ : I want the landscape to fade away into

an invisible fleck, and nothing to be seen but the CHRIST, filling all things and making all things look small under his infinite presence.

We speak of Jesus Christ as a historical character. In no such sense can I be constrained to speak of him except for momentary convenience. Jesus Christ is the contemporary of all ages. He is living as certainly upon the earth as he ever lived in Nazareth. He is the Man of to-day, and there is no man beside. All good things flow from him, all beauty takes the hue of its tenderest colour from his countenance, and all strength is but a flash and throb of his almightiness. It is in this way that I study Christ, and it is so that we come to live upon most intimate terms, so that every day he baptizes me with his blood, and I besprinkle him with my tears. Do not go to the grave to find Christ, you will only find an angel there who says, "He is not here, he is risen." That is the daily speech which may be made about Christ: he is risen, so as to claim a still higher place in the attention and confidence of men, so as to fill a wider place, so as to claim a higher, stronger throne—always rising. The resurrection is not a miracle, measurable within five seconds, or within the twinkling of an eye—it is the perpetual miracle of truth and purity and divine life.

Realize the nearness of Christ. Do not vex your souls by thinking that he lived centuries since. The centuries have nothing to do with his life except to continue it, and to open up some new unfoldment of its infinite compass and resource. I will say to my soul—Thy Saviour is looking upon thee: he is watching all thy growth, he is sending his daily blessings upon thee, he is always dying, always rising, always interceding—a contradiction it may be in literal words, but the soul that has passed through the mystery of that agony which is birth, will understand that amid all this contradiction of letters there is a solid and melodious reconciliation and unity of meaning.

Every name is more or less historical. Even your obscure name has around it a little circle of associations peculiarly and incommunicably its own. What we call obscurity is only a relative term. God knows all the insects that are in the air: all the ephemera that are born in the sunbeam and that die in the moment

of their birth, he registers in his great record. Do not say it does not matter what you, so little, obscure, unknown and socially contemptible, do. Every atom has its own shadow, every life has its own charge, and because you are obscure and uninfluential now, it does not follow that you need be so in the lapse of time. Besides that, consider your son. Sometimes a great figure stands upon a common and rough pedestal: who can tell on the spur of the moment the name of the father and mother of Moses? Yet Moses stands up in the gallery of history, the most towering and indestructible figure. Do not let us therefore look at our own personal standing alone: we cannot tell what lives we may be, under God, creating, guiding, stimulating, blessing. We may bless others by sympathy, we may help the great by prayer—many an obscure suppliant gladdened the great heart of Paul by nothing but simple, loving intercession for him, that he might set his feet upon the neck of his enemies and be crowned with the glory of Christ's honour.

Some of these names were in the *direct* line of the royal succession, and some come into the genealogical table, as it were *indirectly*, so that commentators have to pause in their annotations and wonder how such and such names came into the genealogical table at all. We are soon puzzled by divine providences—things do not always fall into easy straight lines; life is a complication, a problem, a difficulty. Now and again we catch a clue, and think we can unwind the whole, and presently we come to a knot which we cannot disentangle, and which it would be impious to attempt to cut. You know not what your incidental and indirect relations to the great lines of history are. You may be startled some day to find how much you have been and how much you have done. And when you ask how it is that this sudden renown has brought upon you the flame of immortality, the answer may be this: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye did it unto me." Do not say that you are not upon the great lines of history, that you are not tributaries to the great river that seems to fray for itself an infinite channel through the earth, and pours its noble waters into a great sea. All rills trickle into the rivers. There is a royalty of mind as well as a royalty of blood. There is a royalty of behaviour as well as a royalty of

descent. The question for each of us to consider is, whether we are acting up to the measure of our endowment and responsibility, and having answered that question in the affirmative, all the rest will be settled by the Supreme Power.

These words are spoken that I may break the spell of delusion and self-despair under which some men may be suffering. Do we not all suffer from that unhappy spell sometimes? Now and again we say, "Let the gourd wither, and let me cease to live, for all my efforts are but beatings of the air, and I seem to have no relation to the great currents and swift deep movements of divine providence—and why I am here at all I cannot tell: would God the sleeping hour would come, when I might fall off into an everlasting self-oblivion!" It is foolish talk. The very least of us has a mission to fulfil, a function to discharge, a reward to secure. Let me then, as an apostle of Christ, call upon myself, upon every other soul, to seize the privilege and magnify the office to which we are called by the All-wise and All-good Creator.

All generations travail in birth with one greater than themselves. The great man is not yet come, he is always coming. The Son of Man has come? Yes, but not in his glory. Christ has come? Yes, but in his everyday clothes, to begin his work, to give the earnest of his blood—but he is always coming. That was the explanation of apostolic fire and unquenchable enthusiasm, and it must be the explanation of the inspiring force under which our own life is stirred and whirled in its daily course. I am always looking for and hastening to the coming of Jesus Christ. He will never come as a man. He will come with a new coming, wider and more beautiful and satisfying than as a visible figure. Let those explain the meaning of such terms, who have felt what it is to have the heart move to apprehensions and seizures of realities for which there are no words. "Thy kingdom come." Do I thus pray for some great square figure to fall out of the blue heavens and establish itself upon wheels to roll round the earth? I pray, rather, for the infinite domination of ideas, purposes and intentions of the most elevated and sacred kind. When Christianity comes, Christ will come: when the spirit of self-sacrifice has established itself upon the earth, then tell the heavens that the arrival has been completed, and that earth is just outside heaven, sunned with all its light, and made tuneful with all its music.

I find from these genealogical records that the most illustrious lines often dip into strange places and seem to become lost in great moral swamps, so much so that it appears to be impossible they can ever be found again and re-united. There is many a bad man in this list. There are men here who have broken all the commandments of God. There are women here who have done the same. And yet the grand purpose moves on: it is not in the power of men's hands to break the threads of the divine purpose and scheme. The Saviour comes, notwithstanding at times the whole history seems to be depraved and utterly lost. I remark upon this fact the more pathetically because it is even so in the individual life. Sometimes we find ourselves where it seems to be impossible that God can ever find us more. Yet the life is redeemed with great cost to God, for he pays blood for blood, but his redeemed ones are not given over to the power of the destroyer. Cast down, but not destroyed; smitten on the cheek-bone, but not forsaken; cursing, swearing, denying Christ with oaths and blasphemy, flat, black—and then saying, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." As the predicted man came through all the troubled lines, now illustrious with moral purity, now shamed with infinite disgrace, so through my life, and thine, with all their slips and falls, their mighty prayers and horrible blasphemies, our better self shall come, the saint that is in us shall be delivered and nourished and perfected, and through our ungainly life, most depraved and occasionally most loathsome, there shall come that glorious body, that shining self, which is like Christ.

As I read this genealogy, I feel how true it is that grace is *not hereditary*. The good man, so good as to be almost an angel, has a son that shames the very genius of decency and insults with violence the very spirit of righteousness. This is a great mystery, that a mother, whose voice the angels might well mistake for a voice of their own, gives birth to a son that breaks her heart with his great wickedness. And a more astounding wonder still that a man whose name is a disgrace to humanity shall have a daughter beautiful as an angel, a son both philosopher and saint. Despise no man, blame no man, for circumstances over which he had no control, and praise no man for advantages which were thrust upon him without any spontaneity on his own part. Re-

member what your children may be; though oftentimes your minds become shocked and confounded because it seems as if the divine purpose were broken off, know that God is at the head, and through all the process of the suns, his grand purpose is developing and widening itself. Judge not by the accident: do not come to broad generalizations upon the circumstance of the passing moment, remember that all history, all time, all influences are under divine moulding and direction, and when God says, "It is finished," he and the universe may hold quiet and solemn Sabbath together.

In reading further these genealogical records I find that *Jesus Christ came through all sorts of people*. If I were minded to challenge him I could upbraid him with some names that are here, and with cruel taunting I could add bitterness to his cup. He tells me that he came through all sorts to all sorts. It must be so with your life, if you are to be a great minister of God. You must not belong to any one class. You must have been depraved in your ancestors, however holy you are in yourself. O thou Son of Man, I have found thee, ancestrally, in the very pit of shame. What a history lay behind him: how he brought it all up into one focus and lived it over again in his tender sympathy, his universal understanding of human want and his infinite beneficence whilst ministering to all classes of human kind. O thou art my preacher who comest up to every mood of my soul, so that when I am less than beast, thou knowest how to speak to me, and nearly angel, thou canst accost me in the better tongue.

This is the Christ that we preach, the Christ who came through all sorts of people, that he might teach and bless all sorts of people, so that you, wise sage, can go to him and find that your ingenuity is a blunder and your profundity the shallowest of surfaces—so that you, poor sinner, can go to him, and find him girded with a towel, ready to wash with water or with blood the stain that no other but himself can ever reach. And you too, little child, dear sweet little girl or boy, you can go to him, for he himself was the Child Jesus, and he knows everything that swells the child's breast and makes the child's eyes glisten and the child's soul laugh with glee. Behold, this is no class-man, no local deity, no special missionary, no man who can speak in one

language only. His tabernacle is in the sun, and his speech as impartial and universal as the wind.

In looking still further into this genealogical table, I find that Jesus Christ did not always come through the eldest sons. Some of these names are the names of the eldest sons of their families and some are younger sons. God will not be bounded in his movements by our little laws of primogeniture and precedency. To-day he says, "I will go through the eldest son," next time he says, "Younger son, come, I will elect thee." And thus he moves, not by our ceremonial arrangements, but by a grandeur and a sweep of movement which takes in all elements and all arrangements of human life, and gives a tender sanctity to the things that we often foolishly despise.

The question has arisen again and again as I have been perusing this genealogical table, Why did not Jesus Christ come *earlier*? Thus I come upon a mystery in divine providence. Jesus Christ came before he came in the flesh. I want you, therefore, to recall the very first lesson of the morning, that as he comes now, since his flesh was buried, so he came before his incarnation in Bethlehem. Said he, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day." As a Guest, a nameless Presence, a wrestling Angel, a Cloud by day, a Fire by night, an Eye in the wheels of the chariots of Israel, in a thousand ways he came to the olden church, in a thousand ways he comes to the baptized church of to-day. Have all your doors and windows open, for you cannot tell by what means he will find access to your individual life or to your organized existence as churches. Be ready for him. What I say unto one I say unto all, Watch.

Let me say that there is a record in which even *our* names may all be found. Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. Let every soul remember that his name may be written in the Lamb's book of life. When the Saviour was told that his mother and other relatives stood without, desiring to see him, he said, "Who is my mother and who are my brethren? Whosoever doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother." So we may all be in the genealogical tree of which he is the root: we may all be in the great sky, as little stars indeed, of which he is the central and inextinguishable glory.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, who can speak like thee? There is music in thy voice and there is infinite tenderness in every tone which thou dost breathe into the listening heart. Thy words are full of hope; thou dost bring a great brightness to shine upon our dark life, and in many a prophetic word thou dost cause us to forecast the morning and rejoice in the broad light of boundless day. Thou hast never withheld the word of hope from the race of mankind. In the hour of sadness and intolerable depression thou hast caused thy voice to be heard, promising that the light shall come and that the glory of the Lord shall fill the earth. We bless thee that we have seen the fulfilment of thy promises: we live in the cloudless noontide; Jesus Christ thy Son our Saviour has come in all the plenitude of his redeeming power, and after his descent upon us there can be no more night on earth. May we receive him as men receive the light who have been long waiting for it; worn out, wearied, and sleep-bound we rejoice when thou dost come to us with rest, security, and peace. We rejoice when the light calls us to renewed duty and to rekindled hope. May the Son of the Father, the Prince of Peace, the King of kings and Lord of lords be born again in our hearts every day. May our breasts be the Bethlehem of his incarnation, and may our life be the sphere of his illuminating and redeeming ministry.

For his great glad words we bless thee; they are sweeter to our taste than honey, yea than the honeycomb. For his simple but infinite sayings that touch our whole life how can we praise thee enough? We live upon them as upon living bread sent down from heaven; they are our joy and song, they are our strength and security, they are the answer to every hard question, they are the light which turns every mystery into a blessing. We assemble around his cross, we see the tragedy of his suffering, we feel the meaning of his agony—it was for us he thus endured the cursed tree, he was delivered for our offences, he suffered, the Just for the unjust. Evermore draw us away with infinite constraint of love from the foolish delusion that we could have saved ourselves, bind us with ever deepening and ever purifying loyalty to Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, infinite in his redeeming power.

We need this gospel all our life long, but specially in hours of agony when our sin is heavy upon us and our remorse doth eat as a canker and our conscience is as a flaming fire within us, and all life gathers itself up into an unanswerable accusation. Then may we hide ourselves in thy wounded side, Messiah, Son of God. We humbly implore thee to guide us during our life. It is a life that is reckoned in days; behold it is in the power of man to tell us how many breaths there are in our seventy years. We count our small life by its single

respirations—we know not that we may ever draw another breath. Our house is built half over the grave, and at any time the other half may be engulfed in the great tomb. Help us then to live wisely, with sobriety of heart, with dignity of purpose, with obedience of will, having no will or mind of our own, but seeking to live thy will and to breathe all thy purpose. Thou didst make us and not we ourselves; we are thine, we are not our own, therefore would we resign to thee that which never belonged to us, and our prayer would sum itself up in this one desire, namely, not my will but thine be done.

Thou hast clothed us with great and terrible power; thou hast enabled us to blaspheme thy name; thou hast so made us that we can curse thee to thy face; thou hast given us that power, almost divine, which enables us to lift ourselves up in haughty pride and daring, so that we may challenge thy supremacy. We have played the actor well; our hypocrisy has been a life-long success: we have spoken the language of selfishness with the accent of sacrifice, we have hidden the gems and the garments we have stolen, and our wealth is a great theft. Behold our life lies naked before thee, a throbbing, black, horrible lie. Our prayers are aggravations, and our piety but a refined sin. O thou who hast the atoning blood, the riven heart, out of which alone there streams the river that can cleanse the defilement of mankind—let us know the cleansing power of that precious blood.

We put ourselves and one another confidently and affectionately into thine hands: deal with us as thou dost see best: keep us here or send us yonder as may be right in thy sight, not in ours. Make our house larger and multiply our estate greatly, or diminish both and send us into blankness and poverty, if it be for our soul's health. Grant unto our counsels and devices great success and abundant honour, or drive them all back again into our open windows that they may be ours without result, if so be our life may thereby be saved.

Pity us in our distresses, laugh not at us from the heavens derisively when we try to climb and then ignominiously fall, but lift us with strong and healing hands and set us where thou wouldst have us be, and not our will but thine be done, again and again we say. We have no better prayer: it is not ours, it is thy Son's. Amen.

Matthew i. 18-25.

18. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary (probably an orphan, as her parents are not mentioned) was espoused (for a whole year, during which the bride and bridegroom elect did not meet) to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

19. Then Joseph her husband (so called among the Jews from the moment of betrothal) being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

20. But while he thought (was distracted and perplexed) on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived (begotten) in her is of the Holy Ghost.

21. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS (not a specially sacred name), for he shall save his people from their sins.

22. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying :

23. Behold a virgin [*ἡ παρθένος* = *the* virgin, or "even a virgin"] shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

24. Then Joseph being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife :

25. And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son : and he called his name JESUS.

THE NEW DEPARTURE OF HUMAN HISTORY.

FROM this time human history takes a new departure. How otherwise would you have Christ come? You suggest a difficulty or two as to the acceptance of the story we have read : will you be good enough to suggest *another* story by which we shall escape all difficulty, the object being to bring into the human race a man different from all other men, and yet a Saviour and Redeemer of all mankind? How will you escape difficulty in carrying out that grand design? It is not enough for us to criticise the method by which Jesus Christ was declared to have come into the world ; we ought to go one step further if we can, and that is to suggest a method which would have been clear of every difficulty and which yet would have obviously covered the whole ground and accomplished the one supreme design. We are awaiting suggestions : as soon as the right ones come we shall know them : we cannot mistake true music, we shall know whether the wind comes along the earth and brings the earth's dust with it, or whether it comes resoundingly from the heavens and brings with it voices and utterances of the upper and better world. Observe what had to be done : a Redeemer like ourselves in all points had to be introduced into the race, and yet so unlike us as to be wholly separate from sinners. Put that problem distinctly before your mind, and answer how it could have been accomplished as a grand historical success, except on the basis which is laid down in the Evangelic narrative.

Wherever Christ is born it is a miracle. When he is born in us it is by a miraculous conception. You do not suppose that

a man becomes a Christian by some simple and obvious method which anybody can suggest and which any mind can fathom and understand? When Christ is born in your heart and mine, precisely the same operation is gone through as is indicated in this opening chapter of the gospel. It is an unexpected event, it is an event brought about by the overshadowing and ministry of the Holy Ghost. It is associated with ineffable joy, it enlists the co-operation of the angels in lifting up our gladness to its true pitch of utterance. The language of the gospel is only romantic and intellectually distressing to those who bring to bear upon it nothing but the effort of an unassisted mind. Regarded sympathetically, seized émotionally, read in the light of our own individual experience, no other language can so adequately and correctly set forth the infinite wonder and the ineffable emotion as that which we find in the gospel story. Moreover it is in the line of the divine development, it is in harmony with the creation of the first Adam : out of the dust was brought the man, out of the man was brought the woman, out of the woman was brought the Son, out of the Son is brought the Church, which is his body, the glory of his ministry, the conquest of his almighty arm. It is all one line, beginning in the dust, ending where God ends, a development historical, gradual, sequential, complete. In very deed, great is the mystery of godliness.

Human history then, I repeat, breaks away into a new line at this point, namely, the 18th verse of the first chapter of the gospel by Matthew. The great exception takes place here. From this moment human history has an upward direction, and focalises itself in a Personality hitherto but dimly indicated by the voice of often enigmatical prophecy. There are such distinct points of departure in your life and mine. The point of departure, therefore, given by the Evangelist, ought not to startle us as though it had no analogy or confirmation in human experience. I object to the law which says that it can receive nothing that has not a counterpart in human consciousness and experience, because human consciousness and experience may yet have themselves to enlarge : they have not reached the highest and last point of their own development. On the other hand, I would call attention to the fact that there are a great many things within human consciousness and experience which are not distinctly recognised

as being there. Why recoil from the first chapter of the book of Genesis or the first chapter of the gospel by Matthew? If I regard these chapters in a merely literal and verbal way, I am filled with distress. If I regard them sympathetically, and in the light of what takes place in the dim sanctuary of my own consciousness, I understand them every whit. That subtle old serpent, the devil, has talked to me. I do not ask the naturalist to tell me whether, by the conformation of the serpent's mouth, it was possible for the serpent to practise the utterance of articulate language: that is the question of a mountebank. The serpent has spoken with fatal eloquence to every man amongst us. Object to the *figure*, if you like, but the grim, stern, damning *fact* remains. And as to the tree in the midst of the garden, and the fiery, flaming sword and guarding cherubim, I know them. It is impossible to get back to the lost chance, it is impossible to sponge out one spot of crime, it is impossible to find the way to the tree we have once despoiled. To try it is to fight with fire, and the fire roots itself in the inextinguishable furnaces of the divine anger.

And in very deed, if I go further back still, and think of man being shaped out of the dust, I know it: I feel the dust, I feel the DEITY too. I know it must have been out of the deepest dust of the earth some parts of my nature were made, and I also know that there burns within me a fire which only God could have lighted. Observe, therefore, that I do not go back with the grammarian and the pedantic etymologist and ask those teachers to be kind enough to explain to me the opening chapters of Genesis or the opening chapters of human life in any of its grand beginnings and developings. I go down there alone, all silent, all wondering, and MYSELF is the best annotation. So it is with this opening chapter of the gospel of Matthew. Jesus Christ is born in me, and a new departure is taken in my life by processes which can never be explained in words. In your development from infancy to spiritual manhood there comes in the story this all-separating—"NOW." When did it enter? You cannot tell. The chronometer has not yet been made that indicates these millionths of seconds in which great divine ministrations accomplish themselves in births that have no deaths. Have we passed from death unto life? Has Christ been born in us the hope of glory?

Read the chapter still further until you see the wonderful union in Christ of the human and the divine—the human on the mother's side, the divine as indicated by the mysterious operation of the Holy Ghost. This was no imaginary Mary. This literal history was required in order to vindicate her memory from the charge of her being a merely dramatic woman. She was real, like ourselves, one of us; she lived the common human life, wept the common human tears, enjoyed the same enjoyments that fall to our lot: there is enough said about her in the gospels to prove the pure human nature of the woman, and little enough said about her not to magnify her into a feminine god. She is here long enough to be seen, understood, spoken about, attested, initialled by every witness that knows human nature, and behold she is *gone*! The mother of Emmanuel must not remain *too long*: she must be before my eye long enough for me to know that she is Mary, and none other: not a theatrical woman or a paper monster, conceived by the wild imagination of a delirious theology, but a WOMAN, a sister, a friend, a sufferer, a loving one—and then she must go, and I cannot tell how. Buried without a funeral, buried without a grave, buried without an epitaph—gone, and the eye cannot follow the swift movement of her translation.

As for the operation of the Holy Ghost, it begins and ends in the word *miracle*. Yet it, too, is a miracle which has its correspondence in our own nature. I cannot tell the source of my prayers. When I pray with you, it is not I praying, it is a voice I never heard before in that same tone. When I close my eyes to lead you upward, is it by some utterance I have committed to memory, some paragraphs I have formulated in the library, some sentences I have caught and detained as friends? God forbid. *It is a birth of the Holy Ghost*. The poor words, half dumb, and trembling through and through with a throb of conscious weakness, may be partly mine, but the thing they labour to say I know not. Can you tell me the genesis, and give me the roots and starting fibres of all the purposes that have distinguished your life and made it as a flame of sacred fire, burning upward unto the heavens? You can rehearse to me the history of your commerce, and even that you can give in some instances only in part, for you know not whence the brightest suggestions came.

You can tell me somewhat of the outward history of your life and body during the day—as to where you have been and partly what you have seen, but even then the story is remarkable mainly for its incompleteness. Behind, and around, and above there are forces and ministries which have entered as living factors in all you have done, for which you have no name—forces that have broken your thigh in the night's wrestling, but left you in the morning with a nobler name.

Such is the work of the Holy Ghost. It is not to be settled in language. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; thou canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. We *prove* our birth, we do not explain it. I cannot tell you how I came to be; the Lord help every one of us to vindicate his being by temper pure as fire, by love noble as sacrifice!

There was one man who looked on with great wonder. All the ages have crowded round that man, and, so to speak, have thronged him into an infinite multitude, all looking on with the same amazement, all distracted by the same perplexity. Joseph knew not what angel was coming to him along the crooked lines of his mental distraction. We seem to be born to misunderstand everything that is at all great and noble: we cannot understand ourselves, we can give but foolish answers to all the great questions which relate to our own being and our own destiny. No man yet ever satisfied his friend fully and left him in the position in which he could ask no question or suggest no doubt regarding any movement in life which was really tragical, involving suffering when that suffering might have been escaped. You are looking at your life as a great perplexity. God delights in our embarrassments—you cannot see how this knot can be untied, and you feel that it would be impious to attempt to cut it. Be in no haste. I have had a thousand knots like that in my life. When I touched them my fingers were too soft to get hold of the lines that bound them together in hardness. When I have called for steel, I have been guilty consciously of a coward's trick, and the angel has said, "Do not cut it; let it alone: the answer of all things is not yet; in due time that knot shall prove itself to be part of the strange but ever beneficent ministry of the divine and Holy Father."

A most remarkable reason is given why the name should be called *Jesus*. Referring to the 21st verse, you will find that the reason is "for he shall save his people from their sins." Christ is the only man known in history who was born with specific and exclusive reference to the sins of the human family. He does not come into the race with a small programme. The world had sickened at its heart of programmes an inch long ; in its intolerable soreness of soul it could not have endured another. Make way : here is a man who is going to remove the dust from our house windows. We are glad to see him. Make way again : here is a man who is going to remove the dust from our doorstep. Welcome to him also. Again and again make way for a thousand men, each of whom has a short purpose and a superficial programme. So far as they go we bid each a cordial welcome. But when all the thousand have done their little work, and have gone away from our door, we feel that ANOTHER must come with some fuller purpose, with some grander ministry. I thank all men who have done anything for me, but there is a fire in me that is burning up my life—who is to put that out? For all temporary mitigations of suffering I am thankful, but there is an asp biting my soul, and I am dying of its injected poison. Who can touch a mind diseased? This Son of Mary, Son of God, comes with the avowed purpose of *doing this very thing I want to have done*. By so much, therefore, as he even *seems* to rise to the dignity of the occasion, I hail him, for he has caught the genius of my malady—perhaps he may bring with him the one remedy. If he had made light of my disease, I should have run away from him, for he had not then understood me. If he had come with light and jaunty words upon his lips, I should have called him liar, and found the evidence in his tone. But when he meets me he says the case is grave, the case is fatal, the disease is sin, the malady is in the soul, the blood is tainted, the life is rotten, the burden is grievous. I say to him, as a mere man, "Sir, thou understandest me : what is the answer to all this suffering?" And when he says "*Blood*," I feel that we are grappling with a Man that has at all events the right words. Let him prove them—then will he be the crowned Saviour of the race, and his name shall be worn by no thief, but by himself only, every other Jesus forgotten in him whose surname is Christ.

All that we have now read was done in fulfilment of *prophecy*. God does not work extemporaneously, the suddenness of his movements is only apparent; every word he says comes up from eternity around the birth-place of Jesus Christ. There, assembled the prophets and the minstrels of ancient time. "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet." The prophets were misunderstood men; they seemed to sing a song which found an entrance into no heart. Their forecasts were met with derisive laughter, their vaticinations were but the complaints of a disordered and unbalanced mind, and many a time, wrapping their mantles around them, travel-stained, they lay down, saying, "Would God the prophetic afflatus had never moved me to speech." Prophets always suffer. It is a crucifixion to be born before your time. Happy he who speaks the language of the day; popular as a god is he. The man who projects himself by divine energy through centuries ahead, dies a thousand deaths. The prophets suffered for us: Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, and the mighty tribe of men who never spoke to their own day, but shot their thunder voices across the ages, died for us. They have their reward. I cannot think of them as dead dust, scattered upon the winds and going to make up some other man's grave and there an end of them. I must, following the instinct of justice and nobleness of compensation, think of them as seeing the triumphs they predicted, and turning into songs all the tears and woes that afflicted them during their misunderstood ministry.

Joseph was put to sleep by God, and was talked to through the medium of a dream. It is God's old plan: he puts us into a deep sleep, and behold when we come out of it, there is the beautiful companionship of our life standing before us, or there is the great answer to a small difficulty that turned our life into a sharp pain, or there is the way out of an entanglement difficult as a labyrinth, puzzling as a thicket, devised by all the cunning cruelty of our worst enemies. Sometimes I have done, as you have; many a time fallen off into sleep quite unable to do the work that was pressing upon me. A refreshing slumber has blessed the brain, has wound it up in every energy and force, and the awakening has been as a resurrection, and we have gone to the work that defied us, and lo, in the hands recovered by sleep there has been

cunning enough to lift the burden, or to dispel the difficulty, and we who had fainted in weariness, rejoiced in a renewed and apparently inexhaustible strength.

We are most *alone* when we are asleep. God loves to speak to us in our loneliness. We are more spiritual when we are asleep than when we are awake. When I am awake I have to do with all this world: I am lost and dazed amid countless eyes that are watching: I am struck by a million wonders that challenge my attention; my ears are filled with countless noises that fall upon one another and make rough tumult in my soul. God says to me, "Come into the darkness, and I will close thine eyelids and speak to thee alone." If you ask me if I believe in dreams, taking the word dream in its wholeness, I say no: if you ask me if I believe in particular dreams, I say yes. Who would give up his dream-life? In the dream-life we are larger than in our waking hours. In dreams I float through the air by easy and pleasant levitation; I move across difficulties I dare not encounter when I awake. In dreams I step from star to star and cross the horizon at a bound. I know that these things appear to me in a light almost laughable when I awake, yet in my better thinking I get out of them hints, hints that startle me, make me think of possibilities which never come within the dull routine of life, and which have no place in the reckonings of the book-makers.

Thank God for sleep, thank God for dreams, thank God for every ministry that gets you out of your littleness. If any minister of God in any church can charm you away from your counter and your desk, and make you feel, even for one moment, that the universe is larger than you had supposed it to be, go and hear that man: he is your soul's true friend. If by tone of the voice, if by vehemence of appeal, if by tenderness of prayer, he can turn you to an upward look, he is God's minister to your soul. Love him, honour him. You may disagree with him in many of his words, some of his propositions you may be quite unable to accept from an intellectual point of view; again and again he may provoke you into controversy by statements that appear to you either rash or irreconcilable; but by as much as he has the power to make you look up and see God's wonders in the heavens, and to excite in you a desire to be broader and nobler than you are, is he the anointed minister of God to you, and should be received

as such. I read the books that make me larger, I follow the authors that tell me of bigger things than I have yet seen, I love the souls that lure me into sleep that is enriched with dreaming, that extends the horizon, and doubles the stars, and heightens the sky in which they shine. From such companionship I return saying, "I have seen heaven's gate open to-day, and there are lines in this universe that were never dreamed of before in my philosophy."

Thus, then, Jesus Christ comes into the world. We have now, from time to time, to follow him in his wondrous ministry. I will not attempt to prove the miracle of the incarnation by any verbal argument, but I will ask him to meet us here morning by morning, and to vindicate, by the eloquence of his own speech and the marvellousness of his own action, the claim that is set up for him in this chapter—that he is at once the Son of Mary and the begotten of the Holy Ghost.

REVIEW OF THE WHOLE CHAPTER.

You will find it a delightful and profitable study to look at the first chapter of Genesis and the first chapter of Matthew together. I have found it useful to read the one chapter immediately after the other. The contrast between Genesis and Matthew is most vivid, and in some points most startling. In both cases you have what is termed the *Beginning*—a term that cannot be *defined*. There are compasses, one point of which we can lay upon these terms, but the other point cannot be stretched to the full extent of their meaning. Both chapters, with a most startling audacity, give us a point to begin at: they create history, they draw a line and say, "History begins here." How far the beginning is right, has to be ascertained by long-continued investigation. No answer can be immediately given to the bold assumption: it must be found in the course of persistent and enlightened inquiry. Let us, having read both the chapters, look at some of the points of contrast and some of the points of union, and learn as the result of our study how with completeness the Bible confirms itself and challenges attention to points which lie below the surface and are likely to elude the most watchful criticism that is not inspired by the purest desires of the heart.

In the first chapter of Genesis, we see how order and beauty were brought out of confusion, and in the other how spiritual harmony was brought out of infinite discord. In Genesis you have chaos turned into cosmos, in Matthew you have a tumultuous, fierce, rebellious humanity, shaped into dignity and worship, and blessed with the completeness of rest. If these chapters were mere poetry, I should be struck with the manner in which both the conceptions are expressed. The manner is, in this case, nothing less than an argument. This to my mind is one of the most beautiful of the incidental illustrations of the truth of the Bible. In the first instance we have to deal with *matter*. What is the tone in which matter is dealt with? It is a tone of command, it is a fiat. Put into words, the words would be—Let it be done. There is no consultation, there is no entreaty, there is no persuasion, there is no remonstrance. The fiat is omnific. As a mere question of poetic conception this manner is equal to the occasion. When we go into the region of matter, we do not say "If you please;" we stand above it, we command it. This is a fact of our own consciousness and experience. When you want to shape that long stretch of iron into an arch, what do you say? You say precisely what is said in the first chapter of Genesis. You cannot get away from this biblical tether, you say "Let it be done." Is your tone one of beseeching entreaty—do you ask the iron to be kind enough to allow itself to be moulded into an arch? When you want the quarry to yield you stones wherewith to build a temple, what say you? You copy the first chapter of the book of Genesis: you are biblical without the Bible, the tone cannot be changed, you say, "Let it be done," and therein you echo the fiat that rounded the heavens and populated the seas.

This then is true to our own consciousness and experience. I say, "Let my house be built, let it be decorated, let it be richly furnished, let it be thus and so." Why is my tone so dogmatic and positive? Because I am within a region where the human will is supreme. You may remind me of incidental circumstances, and I am not oblivious of them, but their being in the case as details does not for one moment alter the principle which I am endeavouring to elucidate, namely, that wherever mere matter is concerned, our *will* determines its uses. There shall

be a bridge across that river, there shall stand a temple on that site, there shall be a picture on that wall. So far as the matter is one purely materialistic, the will is supreme, the word creates, the word determines.

In the second case, it is not matter that is dealt with, but *manhood*. How different is the process, how long the delay, how intricate the method, how innumerable and subtle the perils. Instead of commanding, we have persuasion, entreaty, nurture, encouragement, even the whole ministry of long-suffering patience and all-hoping love. Looking at this also as a mere conception of manner, how true it is to our own consciousness and experience and method. You can order a coat for your child—you cannot order a character. You can command a *dress* to be fashioned, you cannot command an *education* to be received, except in the only sense, namely, the mechanical, which proves, by a still broader illustration, the very principle on which I am insisting. You can decorate your house with a word, you cannot decorate your child's intellectual nature—nay, you cannot decorate his back without his consent. He tears your jewelled rags from his shoulders, throws them on the ground, steps on them and defies you.

Look, therefore, at both the chapters as indicating a *wide contrast of manner*, a contrast arising from the fact that in the one case it is *matter* that is being treated, and in the other case it is *manhood* that is being created and trained and completed. Can you amend this method? You give orders for a *building*, you cannot give orders for a *soul*. You will go to your desk to-morrow morning, and with one scratch of your pen you will *order* work for a thousand pounds, or ten thousand, to be done, and you properly say you have given the *order*. If you understood the meaning of your own music, you would be taken back to the first chapter of Genesis and set down there repeating the first words—you have never got beyond that liberty! You will come home after having given your *order*, and you will have, with your children round about you, to ask their *consent* to kiss them. It is no kiss upon the child's lip that is given by force—a kiss of the flesh, not a kiss of the soul. Then you will come into the first chapter of Matthew, and find how, by wondrous processes, too subtle to be caught in iron speech, hearts are won, characters are formed, and destinies are determined.

It is by these practical illustrations that I find, again and again, how unexpectedly and wondrously the Bible is confirmed, and how our liberty is restricted by a history thousands of years old. We think we do some things by our own ingenuity and by our own strength, and again and again we are reminded that our originality is stale and our wit a borrowed dart.

If we look at these two chapters side by side from another point of view, we shall find that in both cases the events spread themselves, as to their execution, over vast periods of time. As for the creation, the date is—"in the beginning." Search your calendar for that line, or put a better line in its place. Man likes to know details simply because he is *himself* a detail. But as he grows in the knowledge of God, and in the completeness of his purposed character, viewed in the light of the divine will, he finds that detail is but a momentary convenience. Observe how profoundly true this is also to our own consciousness and experience. Time represents value. We have a saying amongst ourselves to the effect that time is money. Time is more, time represents value: the political economist says that money is nothing, a mere token or symbol, of that which money can purchase—the value is not in the money, it is in the production. And a greater teacher than the political economist tells us that time is nothing; I must look at what time represents: a day is not the same thing to the idle man that it is to the man who is busy.

Lay it down broadly that *time represents value*. "Why," said an artist no sooner born than dead, to a great painter, "do you spend so much time upon your pictures?" The profound and courteous answer was, "Because I paint for immortality." And as a man soweth so shall he also reap. "And why," said one who looked upon a great sculptor, "are you spending so much time over that face? I saw it a month ago, and it seemed to be as far advanced in its formation as it is now." "No," said Angelo, "I have been rounding that cheek, and giving a little additional expression to that nostril, and bringing out that under part of the eye more clearly." Said the observer, "These are but trifles." "True," answered the great man of the chisel, "these are trifles, but trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle." Thus to the wise time represents value. We say of some

buildings that they have been run up in the night time, and when we pass that commentary upon them, we mean it as a sneer, or as an indication of the estimate we place upon the value of the thing done. We call such buildings shells, we say they will need repair in a month or two—no time has been spent upon them, and for no time will they endure.

The expenditure of time, therefore, must have a *moral value* yet to be discovered. What time was spent on building the universe ! Men who have made the universe from that point of view a special study, say that the earth must have taken tens of thousands of ages to build. They ridicule the notion of a six-thousand-years-old globe : they take me down as far as they can to the roots of the rocks and show me the stony registers, pile on pile, where the ages are buried under unsculptured stone. When I compare these wondrous things with what I know to be true in my own consciousness and experience, I reason thus :—Time represents value : a man spends time upon the outworking of a purpose according to the value he sets upon it : if thousands of ages have been sown upon these barren fields, God's meaning in that scattering of the ages upon a rocky surface, must be profound, and is not now to be understood or explained.

Yet to one test I can put this expenditure of time. It is a common test : it is in use amongst ourselves ; we apply it to all things, perhaps even to the most sacred. I can stand on the green surface of the earth and look up into the starry roof, and ask what has come of all this time, what is the *success* which has attended this infinite delay ? Then comes to my waiting mind and heart the great answer :—"Canst thou amend anything that is within thy reach, O man ? Stoop down and pluck thee a grass-blade from thy feet, look at it and say whether thou couldst sharpen it to a finer point, fill it with more delicate blood, clothe it with a tenderer bloom, make it in any respect more beautiful ? Look at the sun : canst thou sphere him out into a more perfect circle, or add one ray to his effulgence, or suggest a supplement to his infinitude of light ?" These questions are put to me with courteousness, yet reading between the lines I feel that they mock me like a defiant thunder. Then I come to the conclusion that time represents value. I cannot paint the lily without painting upon it my own folly. I cannot suggest a single re-

adaptation of any of the functions of my body, I cannot add a healthier colour to my blood, I cannot fix my eyes so as to see better than they now see the wonders of this gallery and museum of things infinite and grand. I cannot *amend* God's work. It is to this little test, yet not useless, that I can bring this marvellous fact of the expenditure of what to us is an eternity, in the building up of a globe that holds upon its face all that is beautiful of summer, and hides in its kind heart all that is ghastly in death.

The Lord having thus made me a universe says, "My child, this is a symbol: this is not made for its own sake, this is meant to teach thee great lessons; it is my board of illustration; I have inscribed the heavens and the earth with innumerable sermons, and lessons, and poems, and parables—go thou and find them out, write them in thine own speech, and make thyself glad in this deep and gracious study." He is also building a spiritual universe, and it takes him a long time to construct it. He is making Man, and man takes more making than all the stars that throw their light on space. Why, this is true at home: you made your carpet, and your table, and your pictures, and your china in no time; you sent them back and had them altered: but your child, the son that has never stooped yet in filial worship at your knee; that daughter, bad with a fire your love has been unable to quench; that will that seems to hold you at its cruel mercy—there your efforts appear to have been wasted.

I might argue that as it has taken God a long time to build *creation*, so it takes him a long time to build the higher creation of *manhood*. I set up no such contention, nor dare I avail myself of any such illustration. The rocks require long time, but *they cannot be damned*. What care I if he pile eternities upon them? They cannot *suffer*. But man dies—and goes to hell! To me, therefore, some tenderer and deeper argument must be addressed than the argument of analogy from the long periods required for physical formations, and the spaces and periods of time required for the development of moral harmony and beauty. I find the necessity for the expenditure of long time, in myself, in my moral nature. I will *not let* God complete his work. I find the reason of the delay in me, *not in him*.

Nor need this be considered as a piece of theological meta-

physics. It is a piece of matter-of-fact life. Every one now hearing me I could summon as a witness to bear testimony to the fact that to do right is not pleasant to any of us. If the religion of Jesus Christ is to be discounted or set aside simply because it takes a long time to make itself universally felt in the world, then with it, by parity of reasoning, must go down everything that is beautiful and noble in human education, morals and progress. Do not suppose that your blow terminates upon the faith of Jesus Christ when you say that if that faith were divine it would make more rapid progress in the world. That blow, if it have any effect at all, shatters the entire temple of beauty, morals, and all that goes to make up completeness of human character. We all agree, for example, that honesty is right and good. Not one dissentient voice is raised to that proposition. But, according to the reasoning by which you wish to upset the divinity of Christ's religion, honesty cannot be good, otherwise every man would be honest. We are all further agreed that temperance is excellent, self-control, personal moderation, having all our faculties, passions, fires of our nature under our entire dominion and sway. To that proposition not one single dissentient voice is raised. But, according to the reasoning referred to, *temperance cannot be a good thing*, otherwise every man would practise it. The very fact that it is rejected, would, according to the reasoning now in question, upset the claim of temperance to be a virtue at all. We are all agreed that cleanliness is beneficial to health: we say properly that without cleanliness there can be no permanent health. That proposition is unanimously carried in every intelligent assembly; but if I am to avail myself of the reasoning which is now levelled against the divinity of Christ's religion, then I reply, cleanliness cannot be beneficial, otherwise every man, woman, and child would instantly be cleanly. Every man, woman, and child is not cleanly, therefore cleanliness cannot be the excellent thing you try to prove it to be.

So with the pleas of God, the expostulations of the Most High, and the offers of the gospel—they all fall into the ruck of these common reasonings, and I, who have been convicted on every point of the former indictment, am convicted with a ten thousand-fold conviction upon the supreme point of all, namely, that God waits to be gracious, and I keep him waiting.

But as in the former case of the creation, so in this latter case of the completeness of the human character, the result will be worthy of him who has been conducting the process. I cannot amend his heavens, add a deeper tint of blue to his sky, increase the richness of the green which he has spread over the earth, suggest an improvement to a single sporule of moss or blade of grass, or feather on bird's wing. In all these things I have to say, "It is very good." If amendment might be possible, not on my side has the possibility been realized. So he will build this other creation, the great house of Manhood, the infinite temple of redeemed and sanctified humanity, and when it is done he will say, "It is very good, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, complete, rhythmic, restful, majestic, immortal." I must, therefore, make right use of the material symbol, and translate it into its highest spiritual meanings. I look for new heavens and a new earth and a new Jerusalem, a church beautiful as the Lamb that redeemed it.

This brings me to the last point of contrast which I can now notice, namely, that in the first chapter of Genesis the endeavour, the process rather, is to *make* man, in Matthew the object is to REDEEM man. In the first instance, we had no part or lot. If you will search into this matter, you will find how at all points you are restricted and humbled, so far as your birth is concerned. For a moment look at this matter. You are *born* without your own will, configured without your own consent: whether you were to be dark or fair, tall or short, strong or weak—not a word had you in that solemn covenant. You were *nationalised* without your own consent, you were not asked, "Will you be born in the temperate zone, or in the torrid zone? Will you be born in a little island or in a broad continent? Will you prefer to be an Englishman or a Turk—an Indian or an African?" In that destiny you had neither part nor lot. Why, your consent was not asked even to the *name* you bear! You were born, nationalised, named, and over these things you had no control whatsoever. How wondrously we are limited on that side of our nature, yet on the other what marvellous freedom we have! We who can curse God to his face, cannot add one cubit to our stature. We who can say "No" to all the eloquence of the divine love, cannot make one hair white or black. Calvinism is true, and Armin-

ianism is true, and they are both in the Bible, and they are both in your life. Limit and liberty, law and freedom, you find everywhere. You are pinned down and cannot break the pin. Yet you have tether enough to give you the notion of infinite freedom.

We were no parties to our being *made*, we are asked to be parties to our being *redeemed*. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Whosoever believeth shall not perish but have everlasting life. Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life. How often would I have gathered thee, but thou wouldst not.

I have spoken of two beginnings, yet the two are but one. Jesus Christ is not a point in history, he is the point which antedates all history. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. He is the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. He created all things, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. When, therefore, we speak of the beginning of the gospel as subsequent to the beginning of creation, we only use a phrase for human convenience. The divine meaning is that all things begin in God, and that God never began.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we bless thee for psalm and gospel ; we thank thee that the olden men were enabled to speak their heart's life in holy psalm. Though they saw not the King, yet did they speak tunelessly of him : it was in no mean praise they forecasted the coming One. Thou didst give them music, music of heart and voice—lo, in that music they all but realised the ineffable joy of the divine presence upon the earth. It is thus thou dost ever treat us : thou dost give us means of utterance which are themselves sacred, and in the very utterance of our prayer thou dost give us sweet answers. We bless thee that we have read the word of the gospel, spoken in no poetry of expression but in the poetry of fact, for we have seen Jesus, and his star, we have been present at the offering of the first worship to the child—may that worship be the key-note of our life, expressing always our uppermost desire : may it be our joy to be found serving no other master, and loyally bending before no other king. We will have this Man to reign over us by thy grace, yea, though we once rejected his dominion, yet now would we contritely and humbly welcome him. We would live in Christ, for Christ would we live, we would be found in him as the branch is found in the vine, drawing our life and its daily sustenance from him who is the one root. Seeing that this is our desire and that it has risen into a prayer, we accept the prayer as the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, and knowing it to be inspired, we are already assured of thine infinitely gracious answer. We would no longer live in ourselves and to ourselves, we would enter into fellowship with Christ in every pang of his suffering and in every ecstasy of his joy. Let this our prayer be answered to-day, and we shall rejoice with exceeding great joy, yea our satisfaction and gladness shall be full.

For all the mercies of another week we bless thee. Thou hast given us a staff to help us along every difficult road, thou hast set lights above us in the time of darkness, in the hour of solitude, thou hast sent companionships for our souls, yea all thine angels have ministered unto us, and because of their society we have not the pain or the temptation of loneliness, thou hast given us food convenient for us, thou hast not neglected us in any point or in any degree whatsoever, thy ministry towards us has been one of overflowing love, we are to-day the living, the living to praise thee with new and richer song for all thy kindness, for thy patience, thy tender mercy. Evermore fill us with a sense of thy presence, let a consciousness of thy nearness destroy all fear of man, let it expel from our heart everything that is of the earth, earthy, and fill us with high desire to enlarge our capacity and to discharge with a more ardent zeal all the obligations of this life.

We mourn our sin ; it makes our tongue black to mention our iniquities,

and our lips quiver under the infinite distress of their burden. We know not where to begin, and beginning, we should never end, for our breath is tainted with corruption, our every thought is borne downward to the dust, our prayers are mingled with earthliness; we cannot escape this bondage except by thy grace, thou loving one, who didst die for us and rise again, to lead us to the noblest conquests. Let thy grace abound over our sin, we now penitently and humbly entreat thee; let the cross of Christ rear itself above all our iniquity, and have written above all the superscription of Pilate the great welcome of thy love, and the gracious assurance of thy pardon.

Enable us to live our few days in peace and quietness, in zeal for all godliness, in diligent and honest service in thy kingdom. Seeing that our days are few, and that they are flying whilst we mourn over their brevity, we may gird up our loins and be instant in season and out of season, doing thy will with lowly patience and with confident trust.

According to our individual necessities, let thy gospel come to us this day. Thou knowest the prayers we cannot utter, thou understandest the thoughts for which there is no language. We ask thee now to come into our heart, to see our need exactly as it is, and to supply our want out of thy great grace.

In our prayer we would remember our loved ones who are not with us, the children too young to come, the sick and the weary, shut up, in pain, desiring release from the torment of a life that has been a long disappointment, yet willing to fall into thine hand and know no will but thine. The poor, the desolate, the feeble, the infirm, the friendless—the Lord's blessing be upon them all, giving them warmth of heart and such renewal of hope as can find its satisfaction in Christ only. Be with those also who are separated from us by long distance: the Lord's merciful messages go out towards them, Sabbath gospels and benedictions—reminding them of this service, filling their souls with all gladness. The Lord's blessing be round about the whole globe like a living light; omit none from thy benediction; let the rudest, poorest, vilest, feel that the heavens are filled with the Father, and that the earth is his footstool.

Let thy word be amongst us to-day, a sweet message, a wind from heaven, a fire from above the fountains of the sun, a great joy, an ineffable rapture; yea, may it be all things beautiful, tender, and ennobling to our waiting souls. Amen.

Matthew ii. 1-10.

1. Now, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem (six Roman miles south-west of Jerusalem) of Judea (so called to distinguish it from another Bethlehem in Galilee), in the days of Herod the King (the father of Herod Antipas and the grandfather of Herod Agrippa, before whose son Paul pleaded), behold there came wise men (Magians—Magicians) from the east (the *far* East, supposed by some to be Persians) to Jerusalem,

2. Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews (not King of the Jews alone, but the king that springs from the Jews), for we have seen his star (an astrological mystery for which there is no modern interpretation) in the east, and are come (more than a four months' journey) to worship (to do homage to) him.

3. When Herod the king had heard these things he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and Scribes of the people together he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5. And they said unto him, in Bethlehem, of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet,

6. And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda ; for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule (literally, shall conduct as a shepherd, ποιμαίνε) my people Israel.

7. Then Herod, when he had privily (secretly) called the wise men (for royalty must consult wisdom), enquired of them diligently (ascertained exactly) what time (having found out the *place* by another authority) the star appeared.

8. And he sent them to Bethlehem (from a metropolis to a village—the usual way !) and said, Go and search diligently for the young child, and when ye have found him bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

9. And when they had heard (equal to the Latin verb *audire*, which implies not only hearing but obedience) the king, they departed ; and lo, the star which they saw in the east went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10. When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

THE RISING OF THE SUN.

HERE would seem to begin the *enquiry* about Jesus Christ which has never since ceased to be the supreme question of the religious mind. That enquiry, I take it, is more eager and widespread to-day than ever it was in any period of human history. Still the great subject is—*where* is Christ, *who* is Christ, *what* is Christ? The books that reveal him most profoundly and lovingly to the human mind and heart are books which hold their own to-day amid the fiercest possible literary competition. All this means something. There is in it a deep and all but tragical mystery ; an agony of the heart speaks in this enquiry of the lips. The life of man wants something more than it has yet secured ; it tries to evade answers that bring with them severe moral obligations, and yet it recurs to those answers as if they were the only profound and vital replies. It is a great mystery, it is even a sharp pain, it is a dense cloud, and out of it there come, in strange and terrible gleamings, lightnings that might affright and destroy the mind that enquires and wonders.

The great enquiry related to that which was *essential* rather than to that which was *accidental*. Of course that which was accidental

had to come into the enquiry. Certain things had been prophetically written, certain places and times had been specifically indicated, and therefore attention must be directed into those quarters. Still the grave and everlasting enquiry relates to that which is essential and immutable. The word upon which I would lay the strongest emphasis is the word *born*. Not upon the word *young*, not upon the word *child*. "Young" is a term that lives on for a few days, and then melts out of our sight and becomes age whilst yet we admire its tender bloom. "Child" is a beautiful bud that bursts into a full flower whilst we are looking at it. But BORN is a historical word, it is the same always, it indicates the revelation of life, the setting up of new ministries and forces in the universe. To be young is to be a child, is to pass through very transitory stages and attractions; but to be *born* sets up a fact, immortal as God. *We* have been born. Our youth has gone like the mist of the morning, our childhood is a hardly remembered sun-spot in our recollection, but our birth hastens to shape itself into a permanent destiny. It is in this light I look upon your dear little children when you bring them to me to be baptized. I do not sneer at babyhood, nor do I say, how can the dear unconscious little infant understand this ordinance of baptism? *Life* is larger than understanding, life is grander than logic. Are we subjects for the vivisection instruments of the Aristotles of the ages? Are we not something infinitely and inexpressibly more? When you bring the child, you bring more than childhood, you bring *life*, and when I throw upon the dear little face the baptismal drops, I throw them not upon a creature six weeks old, but a creature *born*—a new creation, a beautiful presence in the universe, great enough for God to take an interest in, small enough for us to smile about, precious enough for Christ to die for.

This interest in childhood should teach us a great deal. Childhood in itself is little, but it is a quantity that is always growing. Let Pharaoh of old teach us what to do with the children. He said, "These Israelites will be too many for us one day." What, then, did he propose in the view of their over-multiplication? To kill off all the men, or all the women? His was a profounder policy: I would God the Church could seize it and apply it to the current questions of our own economy. He

said, "Kill the boys, drown them." Am I appalled by the idiot's philosophy? No, but I am struck by the wisdom that sees in *childhood*, boyhood, a growing power, and that directs its attention to the early life of nations, for they who begin with the adults begin at the wrong end, and they who begin with the little ones begin at the right point, and may achieve profound and permanent success. Do not sneer at the boys. Do not count them for nothing. They will be your successors, they may now be your scholars. For a time they may grieve you and annoy you, and, by an impertinence that is only for the passing day, they may again and again bring momentary annoyance or distress upon you; but it is a grand thing to have to do with them. Let your gentleness make them great. Show yourself so deeply interested in them, by many an enquiry, as to start in their minds the question whether they be not something greater and grander than they appear to be merely for the passing moment.

Pharaoh and Herod directed their attention to young life. If they could have gotten hold of the young life and turned it in their direction they might have built up very bad sovereignties, but it was one of two things with them, either the boys would overcome them or they must overcome the boys. Let me speak words of strong encouragement and genuine comfort to those of you who are young. You cannot tell what you may be yet. Work with a high aim, be moved to noble and pure ambitions. You will have your broad chance in the world. O may every finger you have, and every faculty, be made keen enough and strong enough to seize the chance and turn it as it were into fine gold.

In reading this text one is struck with the power of *one life* to rouse a world. Observe who they are that gather around this young child. Wise men from the east, kings, chief priests and scribes of the people, and elsewhere we hear of the interest of shepherds who were keeping their flocks by night. A strange thing for these old Persian astrologers to come four months from their homes to see one who was born—not king of the *Persians*, then their journey would have admitted an easy explication—but king of the *Jews*—why should those Oriental star-gazers be interested in Jewish history to this extent? There is more in the question than appears on the surface. This king of the Jews is not king of the

Jews only, but he is the king who springs out of the Jews to be the king of all men. He will choose his own name presently. Our fathers called us what they pleased without consulting us: not a man was asked what name he would bear: his name is the finger-mark of a power he can neither understand nor resist, but there comes a time when every man may make himself a name, may by his spirit and his actions build up an appellation which will endure through all eternity. When Jesus Christ comes to speak of himself he will explain this Persian eagerness. He will call himself the Son of Man. He will broaden away from his birthpoint until he covers the whole area of human nature, answering every throbbing pain, anticipating every distressful prayer, and giving answers greater than any questions that ever could be framed.

Herein is the explanation of all kinds of people wanting to know about Jesus Christ. Philosophy calls in to see what he is. Kings pause a moment on their royal processions to ask questions about him, chief priests and scribes of the people betake themselves to literary research and religious investigation that they may be able to answer popular enquiries concerning this unnameable Man. And all kinds of poor people want to know where he is, that they may speak to him a prayer that has come back from every door, a bruised bird that could find no space for its flying. We have read in the seventy-second psalm of the first Solomon, type of a greater, who shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth—why? Heard ye the sweet answer? *For he shall deliver the poor and the needy and him that hath no helper.* This is not a painted majesty, a gilded dominion, a great comet-like blaze of transient splendour: it is a monarchy built on *beneficence*. He who makes it his supreme business in life to help the poor and the needy, the Woman and the Child, the far off and the destitute, the misunderstood and the friendless—nothing can hinder him putting on his head crown upon crown until other kings look petty beside his majesty.

It is thus that Jesus Christ will reign. Not by force of chariots and multitudinousness of horses, not by the grandeur of his earth-state, but by that loving sympathy which understands everybody, by that infinite beneficence that stops not at donations of the hand but gives all the blood of its heart. Hereon ye may build

the Christian argument, and naught will be able to overthrow it. They will be able to ask you difficult questions about miracles and mysteries of every kind, they will be able to puzzle you with grammatical enquiries, they may lose you altogether in historical and archæological investigations and references: your heads may become bewildered there—you stand to this grand sovereign fact, let *him* be king who can do most for men. Here you have the key which explains the intruding upon Christ of all the nations and climates of the world.

Yet one cannot but be struck with the different purposes of the inquiry. The Magians said, "We have come to worship him,"—literally to do homage to him. Trust the men who can do homage to anything, out of and greater than themselves. Always set a high price upon reverence. Veneration is the basis of all noble and tender and beneficent character. I would distrust the man who has proved himself destitute of veneration. It does us good to bend the knee to an object which we suppose to be greater than we are ourselves. We have all seen the poor superstitious creatures, as we deem them, on the continent of Europe, coming into the churches for a moment and bowing and genuflecting after a manner which we could not understand. I never could mock that service. I have thought I have seen upon the peasant's face a tenderer expression, a more glowing solemnity because of that little service in the house of God. There are men who are greater in blasphemy than in reverence, and the world over they never had anything good to say of men, and they never did anything for men worthy of a moment's remembrance. Why have we come into Christ's house this morning? If we have come to worship him, we shall retire from the house larger and better men: the small critical function with which we might have distressed ourselves in passing through the service will be suspended, and in our hearts there will glow a fire of new love. By so much as we have bent the knee lovingly and loyally to the Son of Man have we thrown off the worst part of ourselves, and taken upon us part of that which constitutes his beauty and strength.

Herod's purpose was not to worship him: he said it was to worship—he lied. Can men lie about religious things? Yes. Can men say *worship* when they mean *destroy*? They say it every day. Can men be found who will put up a church for Christ and

yet not know what they are building? Alas! it is not only possible, it is the saddest fact of our business, that we build temples, and curse the stones as we put them together. We set up minsters, not with songs but sometimes with oaths. There is a possibility of destroying Christ, under the guise of worshipping him, and there is a further possibility of destroying Christ more or less unconsciously, by giving false notions of him, by making him a class-Redeemer, by setting him apart for sectarian uses, by attaching to him badges and labels, scarves, and memorials, that make him belong to one corner only, by narrowing his words down into denominational shibboleths—by a thousand such ways we destroy Christ's influence in the world. Know ye that Christ is a Sun which cannot be touched, and also a light which plays with loving familiarity upon the one-paned cottage of the poor man and upon the stately palaces of royalty and wealth? He is a Sun not to be clipped by your instruments or rearranged by your eager fingers, and he is a light that will bless you, but must never be trifled with.

Then there are other men who do not come to worship Christ, and who certainly do not come to destroy him—who simply come to *speculate* upon him. They make him an intellectual puzzle. He is the mystery of the day to them, they must say something about him, he is an enigma they cannot afford wholly to ignore, and it is heart-breaking to hear the chaff they pour forth without one grain of wheat in the innumerable bushels. And sadder still to hear the *patronage* they offer the Son of God. Have you heard how they speak about him? With measured approbation, with a fine critical discrimination as to his properties, and qualities, and place in human history. It makes me sad to hear how they damn him with faint praise. They say he had upon him the inspiration of genius, they allow that he was an excellent character, perhaps a little too amiable now and then. He had wondrous prevision, he saw a great deal more than many of his contemporaries saw. He was a very excellent man in all his purposes; his motives were unquestionably good. If he is not more than that, he is the crowning hypocrisy of history. What I dread amongst you most is not that you will destroy Christ, but that you will patronise him. You who laid the hand

upon the fat bullock and said "Good," will put the same paw upon the Son of God and say "Not bad." He will resist such patronage, and denounce it, and decline it, and return it to rest upon those who gave it. It will be a curse that they can never survive.

Jesus Christ is nothing to me if he is not the Saviour of the world. I never heard persons in moments of great agony or distress speak about the inspiration of genius being upon Christ. I have heard them say so when they were doing well: I have heard them speak thus about Christ when they were parenthetically interposing, "No more, thank you," about their fat dinner. But when I have seen them doubled up with great distress, and thrust into dark corners, and carrying burdens that break the back, and shuddering under clouds that may be laden with death darts, I have heard a whimper that would have disgraced a dog. You will know what Jesus Christ is most and best when you are in greatest need of such service as he can render.

You find, too, very different results flowing from these inquiries. Herod was troubled, but the wise men rejoiced with exceeding great joy. This is a summary of to-day's experience. It is one of two things with this Christ in the life. He is either the source of your keenest troubles, or he is the beginning and the end of your supremest joys. The good always trouble the bad. The honest clerk troubles you who are not honest. You hate that young man: he is good to look upon, he is pleasant to speak to, he is most companionable, many an attraction attaches to his method and ways amongst men, but his honesty is a continual judgment upon your dishonesty. If you were to hear that he had dropped down dead, it would only be a hypocrite's sigh that would answer the announcement. It is a law of the universe, if we may judge by its being a law of society, that the bad are always troubled by the good, the generous giver is a daily trouble to the penurious man: he finds motives for his generosity, he attributes his liberality to false inspirations, he wonders he could not be more prudent, careful, and thoughtful: all the while in his heart he hates the man who by contrast throws him into very cold and distant shadow.

On the other hand, no man has given such joy to the world as Jesus Christ has given. He carries all his disciples up to the

point of rapture. Such have been the feelings of Christian men that a new language has had to be invented for the expression of their lofty and sacred emotions. Religion, say you, has a cant of its own: it is only a cant to those who have not been fired to the same intensity of zeal, and brought to the same nobility of sacrificial temper. When the Christian man shouts, "Praise the Lord, Amen, Hallelujah," he utters a fool's language to those who have never been in his temper. It is a foreign tongue to them, which they can only answer by foolish mocking. But there are times in the religious experience when only such a word as Hallelujah—Hallelujah—a word not to be explained in smaller terms—expresses the dominant feeling of the excited and grateful soul.

Have you seen Christ's star in the East? That is a sight which we may never behold; but we may see a greater sight than that. We may see himself. It is only the accidental that drops off—such words as "young," "child," "Bethlehem," "star"—fall away into their proper insignificance, but such words as "born," "King," "Christ," "Redeemer," "sin," "salvation"—abide with a most indestructible permanence in human recollection. It will be a happy day when we are more eager to see Christ than we are to see any symbol of Him that could be found, either in the heavens or on the earth. I do not want you, as my fellow-students of his Word, to care about baptism and the Lord's supper, and the Sabbath-day, and the church built with hands—except as these may lead you further into the inner sanctuary where is enthroned Christ himself. If I found men now earnestly searching the heavens with the most scientifically constructed telescopes, that they might find a star resembling what the Persian sages saw, that they, too, might follow its guiding light to some distant Bethlehem, I would say to them, "Christ is not here nor there: he is not to be found in sign or symbol now, except in some low and momentarily convenient sense. He *himself* is with us; he is to be found in our consciousness, he is to be the answer to our sin, he is to be the satisfaction of our hunger, he is to be the light of our intellectual firmament, he is to be the glory of our spiritual hope."

What, then, is our supreme anxiety to-day? Is it to see the star or to see the Saviour? Is it to make a prophetic calculation of years and months, or to go out of the heart searching for

One who is the answer to sin and the balm for its cruel wounding? If you say, "Sirs, I would see Jesus," you will find him in the Holy Scriptures, you will find him in every Christian's experience, in proportion as it is enlarged and true; yea, you will find him in the very question itself, for no man ever asked that question with the sincerity and earnestness of fire, without the answer beginning the moment the question ended.

NOTE.

"The name 'Magi,' by which they are called in the Greek of St. Matthew, is perfectly vague. It meant originally a sect of Median and Persian scholars; it was subsequently applied (as in Acts xiii. 6) to pretended astrologers, or Oriental soothsayers. Such characters were well known to antiquity, under the name of Chaldeans, and their visits were by no means unfamiliar even to western nations. Diogenes Laertius reports to us a story of Aristotle's, that a Syrian *mage* had predicted to Socrates that he would die a violent death; and Seneca informs us that magi, *qui forte Athenis erant*, had visited the tomb of Plato, and had there offered incense to him as a divine being. There is nothing but a mass of confused and contradictory traditions to throw any light either on their rank, their country, their number, or their names. The tradition which makes them kings was probably founded on the prophecy of Isaiah (lx. 3). The fancy that they were Arabians may have arisen from the fact that myrrh and frankincense are Arabian products, joined to the passage in Ps. lxxii. 10.

"There was a double tradition as to their number. Augustine and Chrysostom say that there were twelve, but the common belief, arising perhaps from the triple gifts, is that they were three in number. The venerable Bede even gives their names, their country, and their personal appearance. Melchior was an old man with white hair and long beard; Caspar, a ruddy and beardless youth; Balthasar, swarthy and in the prime of life. We are further informed by tradition that Melchior was a descendant of Shem, Caspar of Ham, and Balthasar of Japheth. Thus they are made representatives of the three periods of life, and the three divisions of the globe; and, valueless as such fictions may be for direct historical purposes, they have been rendered interesting by their influences on the most splendid productions of religious art. The skulls of these three kings, each circled with its crown of jewelled gold, are still exhibited among the relics in the cathedral at Bologna."—FARRAR'S *Life of Christ*.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we know thee through Jesus Christ our Lord, our Priest and Saviour. He is the Mediator between God and Man, he is the propitiation for our sins, his blood cleanseth from all guilt, he is our joy and our strength, and there is none beside him, our whole salvation, a redemption complete and infinite. We assemble to-day around his Cross, we touch the dying Lamb, we look first at our sin and then at his grace; where sin abounds grace doth much more abound, so that the blood of Jesus Christ thy Son is our answer to thy fierce law. We have no other reply, our hearts are silent when thy law accuses, but in Christ Jesus and his cross, and in all the wondrous work he did, we find our answer to the accusations of thy righteousness and all the challenges of thy law. We pray in his name; our intercessions are mighty because they are offered at his cross; they are weak and worthless in themselves, but because of what Jesus is and what Jesus did, all our weakness is turned into strength, and our trembling prayer becomes a prevalent intercession.

We have come to bless thee with a new song, for thy mercies have been renewed in our life day by day. Every hour has brought its own miracle of grace, every moment has seen some fresh display of thy patience or providential care. The very hairs of our head are all numbered. Thou hearest the throbbing of our heart, thou knowest the way that we take; yea, thou dost beset us behind and before, and upon us is laid thy gentle yet mighty hand. We are here because of thy goodness, thou hast saved our soul from death, we are yet on praying ground, we have the opportunity of uttering our psalm and hymn and prayer unto Heaven in the name and for the sake of the one Saviour. Thou hast given us bread to eat, thou hast sheltered us from the darkness and the storm, thou hast given unto us rest in sleep, and the renewal of strength therein, thou hast continued unto us our reasoning faculties, the chain of our friendship has not been broken in one link—because, therefore, of all these thine earthly mercies, we bless thee with a rising gratitude, we praise thee with a full heart, for thy mercies have been many and tender.

Thou hast, above all things, nourished our souls. Though we were branches that had no place in the living stem, yet hast thou grafted us in, so that now we partake of the root and the fatness of the olive. Thou didst find us when we were lost, thou didst make us sons when we were aliens and wanderers, thou didst invest us with all the privileges of thy church when our arm had been lifted against thee in continual rebellion. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. May we enjoy all thy privileges now, may we seize our inheritance and claim it with our whole heart, so that we who

were poor by reason of this world's sins and distresses may now become rich with imperishable wealth. To this end do thou pour upon us the Holy Ghost ; may he dwell in us, ruling our thought and purpose and will, and sanctifying us altogether, till there be in our whole nature nothing of impurity or wrong. Complete the miracle of thy grace in our sanctification ; may we be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, glorious personally, and glorious as a redeemed church.

We put our life into thy care day by day. We know not when its last breathings shall be ; help us, therefore, to be diligent with all care and filial anxiety to do that which is right in thy sight, and to make the most of our day and generation. Deliver us from the torment of fear, save us from the hell of despondency, create in us that happiness, that overflowing joyousness which comes of complete trust in God. May we not give way to the temptation of the evil one, may our fears never multiply themselves against us to the extinction of our hope, and in the darkest night may we see some distant and trembling star, in the coldest winter may there come upon us now and again some gleam of light that tells of the summer that is yet to dawn. In all the way that we take give us guidance, ensure unto us defence, then shall our steps be steady, and they shall all point towards the city of light and the city of rest.

Thou knowest what we need : grant unto us, we humbly pray thee, in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, that which our heart most truly requires. Wherein our words do not express our needs, do thou not hear those words nor answer them : wherein we are inspired to speak of our real and vital wants, do thou command thy blessing to rest upon us, even life for evermore. Pity us when we are infirm and little in soul and in purpose, save us when we are most conscious of our aggravated guilt, fill our vision with thy beauty when that which is of the earth and time would tempt us with its meaner attractions.

Hear us when we pray one for another, when we pray for heads of houses that they may be clothed with wisdom, sobriety, and grace, for children, that they may be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, for masters and servants, that they may understand and help one another, for the sick and the afflicted, that in their weakness they may see the incoming of Christ, bringing with him health and immortality, for the distant and the wandering, those from whom we are for the moment separated, that there may be no division of soul or distraction of love, but that though far apart, we may yet be one in affection and godly desire.

The Lord hear us on account of those who never pray for themselves, those who are aliens and prodigals, who have broken every vow, dishonoured every covenant, and have gone far away into the bleak wilderness of iniquity—the Lord's Gospel flee after them like a saving angel, and flash upon them some home-light or strike in their hearts some tender chord that shall bring them back again, that there may be rejoicing on earth and in Heaven. The Lord's light make our morning glad, the beauty of the Lord himself be upon us, making our souls lovely with his presence and strong with his grace. Amen.

Matthew ii. 11-15.

11. And when they were come into the house they saw the young child (the child first, not the mother : this order should be marked) with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him (a word often used in a double sense ;

Xenophon says that Cyrus was *worshipped* by his subjects; and when they had opened their treasures (caskets or packages), they presented (according to oriental custom) unto him gifts: gold and frankincense, and myrrh (Psalm xlv. 8, lxxii. 15; Isa. lx. 6).

12. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

13. And when they were departed, behold, the (an) angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt (the nearest asylum), and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod (who had murdered his wife and three sons, will seek the young child to destroy him.

14. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother (this order is unnatural, if not inspired) by night, and departed into Egypt (near: Roman: independent of Herod).

15. And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet (of Israel, but typically of Christ): saying, Out of Egypt have I called my Son.

THE WISE MEN'S WORSHIP.

“THEY found the young child with Mary, his mother.”
Surely this is an inversion of the right method of stating the case; judged by our little rules, pedantic and inadequate. A critic might here interpose and say, You have adopted the wrong order of sequence, you have inverted the proper method of statement. Instead of saying, Mary, the mother, and the young child, you have actually put the young child first, and thus you have inverted the order of time. Nor is this a slip, for I find the angel of the Lord adopting the same sequence, in the 13th verse, saying to Joseph, in a dream, “Take the young child with his mother,” and afterwards in the 20th verse, the angel again says, “Arise, and take the young child and his mother,” and, in the 21st verse, “Arise, and take the young child and his mother.” The frequency of the repetition shows us that to indicate the young child first and the mother afterwards was not a literary slip.

When will we learn that life is larger than logic? When will we keep our little technical rules away from great providences and mysteries? We are ruined herein by our own exactness. The literalist can never be right in anything that challenges the highest efforts of the mind. He who is right in the mere order of words, after a pedantic law of rightness and accuracy, often misses the genius, the poetry, the overflowing and ineffable life of things. He boasts of his exactitude, he is very clever in defending

himself against etymological and critical assaults, but he is vitally wrong. Within the limits which he has assigned for the movement of his powers he is right, but those *limits* themselves are wrong, and, therefore, it is possible to be partially right and yet to be substantially and vitally in error. He, for example, who says the earth stands still, is in a popular sense right, and yet his statement is absolutely wrong.

If we could apply this great thought of the largeness of life to the interpretation of Scripture, we should not be fretted by many of those petty and distracting criticisms which bring down heaven to the scale of earth, and vex us with unworthy controversies. The rule is Christ *first*—the young child mentioned at the top of every list. "He was before all things, and by him all things consist." If he is Alpha, he is Omega; if he is the young child, he is the Ancient of Days. He takes precedence of the whole universe, for he was before it—he laid its foundations, and arched its canopies. Refrain, therefore, from little and dwarfing criticisms as to chronological sequence, and abandon those neat exactitudes which, by their very superficial claim to being considered right, may prevent the entrance into the mind of the larger light and the broader revelation.

When the wise men came into the house they fell down and *worshipped* the young child. They did not fall down and worship Mary—they hardly saw the mother. Who can see anything but Christ when he is there? To see anything in God's house but God is to waste the opportunity. The wise men worshipped the young child, they did him homage, they bent before him, they became oblivious of themselves in his presence; not a word might they say, for worship when deepest is often silent. Words have been hindrances in the way of spiritual progress. Words are to blame for the thousand controversies that afflict and distress the Church. I would to God we could do without words, for who can understand even his friend? Who can catch the subtle emphasis, who has eyes quickened to see the colouring of the word, and sagacity to set it in its right place, so as to lose nothing of its rhythm, and harmony, and sweet intent? Whatever the word worship may mean here, religiously—for that word is used ambiguously both in the classics and in Scripture—it is evident that the wise men offered homage to the young child. The right

attitude of wisdom is to bend before Christ, to be silent in his presence, to wait for him to lead the conversation. If wisdom venture to utter its voice first, it ought to be in inquiry or in praise. Wisdom is always reticent of speech; it is the fool who chatters, the wise man thinks. When Socrates was told that he was the wisest man in the world, he ran away, and yet returned to accept the compliment, for, said he, "I knew that I knew nothing, and I have met with no other man so wise."

If we come into the house where Jesus Christ is, our business is to imitate the wise men who came from the far east, namely to bend the knee, to put our hand over our eyes, lest we be blinded by the great light, to be silent, to wait. It would be well, if in our brief time of worship we could set aside a few minutes for absolute silence. No minister to speak, no organ to utter its voice, no hymn to trouble the air. If we could, with shut eyes and bent head, spend five minutes in absolute speechlessness, that would be prayer, that would be worship. The fool would misunderstand it, and think nothing was being done, but as the last expression of velocity is rest, so the last expression of eloquence is silence, and sometimes the highest liturgy is to be dumb. We have banished the angel of silence, the angel of quietude is a nuisance to our fussy civilization; we have set noise in the front, and silence has been exiled from the Church.

Not only did the wise men worship Christ, they presented unto him *gifts*, "gold and frankincense and myrrh." This is the method of love. Worship is *giving*, it is not receiving. We are never to see Christ without giving him *ourselves*. Jesus Christ does not seek the homage of a courteous recognition, he seeks the loyalty of absolute *sacrifice*. The wise men gave him all they had, and Jesus Christ never says, "Hold, you have given enough." Never, till the heart's last fibre is given to him, and the last red blood-drop falls upon his hand—then, having received us in the totality of our being, his soul is satisfied.

"And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way." God is in continual communication with the right-minded. He speaks to them by starry eloquence. He speaks to them in words and visions and dreams. He is a God nigh at hand, and not afar off to all those who are rightly disposed towards him

and whose hearts rise up in vehement desire to know his will. He will be as near us as our desire is pure: the fire of our earnestness will be, as it were, the measure of his readiness to come and give us guidance and defence. He spake to the wise men in a dream. We have debased the word dream, and then we ask one another with a hilarious scepticism if we believe in *dreams*? What word have we not fouled and despoiled, and then, having brought it to its smallest significations, we have turned round and asked if we believe that such terms can be measured by divine revelations? By overfeeding, we have brought upon ourselves all the distresses of dyspeptic nightmare, and having come out of the nightly struggle, we say, "Now do you suppose that there is any truth in *dreams*?" See how the argument is put upon a false centre, see how we first *waste* the inheritance, and then demand its *value*!

What does the word dream signify? Not a nightmare, not the incoherences and ravings of a disordered brain, resulting from overfeeding. It means the outgo of the soul towards the invisible, distant, spiritual, incomprehensible, eternal. We have lost the dream out of the Church. We have lost *everything*—prophecy, tongues, miracles, songs, gifts of healing, helps, governments, enthusiasms, heroisms—we have lost them all! It is just like us—fools, we ought never to have been trusted with anything! What have we left now? Nothing. Miracles gone, prophecy gone, the devil gone, God—GOING. As for dreams, we have long survived their foolish means of communicating with the invisible. As for dreams, we despise them, and laugh mockingly over our smoking chocolate, and ask one another if we believe in *dreams*! Reclaim the original signification of the term, rebuild the shattered inheritance, and then ask the great question, and you shall have a great reply.

The dream stands for that grandest of all powers, the religious imagination. That, again, is a word which must be used with great guardedness, because the word imagination has itself been stripped, wounded, and left half-dead. Who can now define imagination with the original fire and with the original grandeur? We abuse and misapply the terms. We now say, speaking of a man who makes false suppositions, "He *imagines* things." When we so use the word, we use it with improper limitations, and in

short we give a wrong turn to the term. No wonder, therefore, that we are afraid to use the grand word Imagination in any religious sense. It is only a man in a century or two who is really gifted with imagination. Imagination is a *creative* faculty, imagination *images* the unimaged, gives visibility and palpableness to the immaterial, the unmeasured and the unnamed.

When we charge certain persons with having no imagination they start and say, "If we have one faculty more than another, it is imagination." When we ask them to provide the proof, what do they reply? They mistake description for imagination: thus they will describe an object as blue on one side and yellow on the other and surmounted by a coronal of red, and then they will claim for their speech the sublime epithet of imagination! It is a house painter's imagination. It is the imagination of a man who paints rustic signs for rustic inns. Imagination!—it is God's supreme gift to the human mind. When a thought presents itself to the intelligence, imagination *bodies* it, gives it form, configuration, colour, and enters into high dialogue with the strange and most wondrous guest. The most of us have no imagination; the next best gift we can have is to listen with patience rising into delight, to the man to whom God has given this great gift, of making the dumb speak, and calling into visibleness the unseen and impalpable.

The wise men "departed into their country another way." God knows the way into your countries and kingdoms, how distant soever they be. You have made a high road out of your Persia into the distant Judea, how will you get back again? Why, by the same road—there is no other, say you, in conscious wisdom concerning the whole topographical arrangement. The angel of the Lord says, "I will show you the way home: not one step of the old road shall you take, I will make a way for you." Do not say there is no way out of your difficulty. It is a family difficulty, or a difficulty imperial or ecclesiastical, or a difficulty upon which you can take no human counsel. Do not, therefore, say that your way is passed over from your God, that you have been brought into a *cul de sac*, and must bruise your heads against the resisting and defiant walls. Stand still, and say, "Lord, show me thy salvation: take me home by another way: I thought this was the right road, I find that my thinking has been misinformed,

or that circumstances have arisen which throw my calculations into perplexity and environ my life with strange and mighty opposition. Lord, I will not move one inch until thou dost lead the way." Say you so—is that your heart's sweet litany? No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper. Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him and he shall bring it to pass. Oh, rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him, and he shall give thee thy heart's desire.

This incident shows us in how many ways God interposes in human affairs. The angel of the Lord *warned* the wise men, and he also warned Joseph. There is a ministry of warning in our life. Why that sudden start? You cannot explain it. It was a frightening angel that looked upon your life for a moment, and by his look said, "Not this way—straight on." Why tear up the programme on which you have spent months? You cannot explain why, but a voice said to you, "That programme is all wrong, tear it to pieces and throw it into the fire: there is danger there. Beware, take care. Not this road. Trust not to thine own understanding. That programme is a witness to thy folly and shallowness: throw it from thee as thou wouldst throw poison, and stand empty-handed before God, and ask him to write the way-bill." "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Lean not to thine own understanding."

Sometimes God sends warnings to us in extraordinary ways by extraordinary people and under improbable circumstances. I am conscious of the presence of this warning ministry in my life, though I have no words subtle and keen enough wherewith to express all that I feel on that solemn subject. Shall I shake hands with yonder man? I think I will, he looks healthy, he looks kind, and yet in the midst of all these hopeful lucubrations, my hand takes sudden palsy and I will not shake hands with him, and cannot. How so? There is a warning angel in my life. I, poor unsuspecting fool, would shake hands with every man who smiles upon me, for I have no eye for the detection of the villain's cheek, but the warning angel says, "Take care, go aside, he is a goodly apple—rotten at the core."

Not only is there a warning ministry in this incident, there is also a *watching* ministry. The angel of the Lord watched Herod, watched the young child and his mother, watched the wise men.

O those watchers that fill the air—your mother, your child, your friend, your guardian angel—every one of us has an angel-self, to be seen only with the eyes of the soul's inspired imagination. They watch us night and day. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be the heirs of salvation?" I am alone, yet I am not alone, for God's angel is with me. Do not live a little fleshly life, do not shut yourselves up within the limits of your constabulary arrangements and imagine that no eye is upon you but the eye of detective and suspicious law. Love watches, redemption, embodied in Jesus Christ, watches, we are beset behind and before, and there is a hand upon us, and a kind eye is behind the cloud, looking now and again upon our life, and flashing a tender morning ray upon our long-bound and darkness-wearied souls.

Learn from the next passage in the incident, that man's simple business in perplexity is to *obey*. "Joseph arose and took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt." Obedience sometimes requires *activity*. The angel said, "Arise and flee." That is the easiest part of obedience. There is no difficulty about fleeing, about exerting oneself; the blood heats, and activity is delight. God puts these calls to activity into our life at the right times and with the right measure of appointment. Why, you say, you would have died on the dear friend's coffin, but that you were obliged to arouse yourself to attend to the last obsequies. Kind is the way of God even in these matters. When death darkens your window and turns your day into night it always says to you, "Arise and flee, work, arrange, settle," and one of the first things you have to do in the midst of your intolerable agony is to bestir yourself. In that bestirring there is sometimes salvation.

After activity comes *patience*. The angel said, "And be thou there until I bring thee word." That is the *hard* part of life. Whilst I am climbing the mountains, passing through the wildernesses, daring dangers, I feel comparatively quiet, or even glad. But to sit down when the angel tells me to sit, and not to stir till he comes back again—who can do it? I enquire of the first man who comes near me, whether I cannot get away out of Egypt? He says he thinks I can if I try the next turn, and I, disobedient soul, move towards the next turn, and if a wolf sent of God did

not show its gleaming teeth at me there, I would be off, so fond am I of activity and self-direction, and so impossible is it to me to sit still and see the outworking of the divine will.

The true interpretation of human purposes is from God. Herod said, "I will worship him, when you bring me word." The angel said, "Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." Herod said *worship*—Herod meant *destroy*. The angel knows our meaning: God does not take our words always in the sense in which we offer them. He reads between the lines, he peruses the small print of the motive and of the inward and half-revealed or even half-formed desire. He shows us to ourselves. Sometimes when we say *worship*, he shows us by an analysis of our own acceptation of the term, that *destroy* is the proper meaning of our language. Lord, interpret my speech to me: I use words of false meaning, I think sometimes I mean to be religious—show me that some religions are lies, and that some prayers are offences. Save me from being my own lexicographer: when I write a word, do thou, gentle Father, ever wise, write after it its true and proper meaning.

The young child, Mary and Joseph, are now, at this point of the incident, away in Egypt. There are times of *retreat* in every great life, times when Christ must be driven into Egypt, when the prophet must be banished into solitude, when John the Baptist must be in the desert eating locusts and wild honey, when Saul of Tarsus must be driven off into Arabia—times when we are not to be found. An asylum need not be a tomb, retreat need not be extinction. For a time you are driven away—make the best of your leisure. You want to be at the front, instead of that you have been banished to the rear: it is for a wise purpose. Gather strength, let the brain sleep, yield yourself to the spirit of the quietness of God, and after what appears to be wasted time or unprofitable waiting, there shall come an inspiration into thy soul that shall make thee strong and fearless, and the banished one shall become the centre of nations.

PRAVER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thy way is very wonderful, and we cannot find it out; thou dost justify thyself in righteousness and in mercy, notwithstanding our sore perplexity and the vexation of our soul in time of trouble. Thou dost send men on strange errands, thy requests are bold; thou dost lay thine hand upon our life, and require it as our gift. Who can restrain thee? Who can mitigate thy severity? Who can answer thy great thunder? What sword have we that can reply to thy lightning? Teach us that our place is to obey, to receive the will from heaven, and with all patience and loving industry to do it every whit. How can we do so? We are of yesterday, and know nothing; we mistake the near for the precious and the great; we do not allow for distance and colour in the proportion of things, so we are constantly mistaking that which is in our hand as being greater and better than that which is afar off. We consult impatient temper; we are the slaves of an imperfect and depraved will; a thousand mean and treacherous appetites besiege the very centre and source of our best life—how then can we obey? This is of the Lord's doing: we are saved by grace and not by work; this is not an offering of our own; it is the outworking of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. We do not marvel now that we must be born again; we bless thee for this gospel of regeneration, which is the gospel of the heart of thy Son, for the laver of regeneration is filled with nothing less than the blood of the heart of Christ. To no baptismal water do we come, but to a laver and fountain of regenerating blood. The blood of Jesus Christ, thy Son, cleanseth from all sin. We would test its power; we would see our sin cleansed by its efficacy; we are weary of sin: it fires those whom for a moment it pleases—the fire of wickedness goes out and leaves a death-like cold behind it. We would therefore turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart; we would live in the Lord, for the Lord would we live, our delight would be in thy testimonies, and our satisfaction in thy service.

Thou hast appointed unto us but a few days wherein to live. Our life is as a dying smoke, or as a wind that flieth speedily away and which none can find. We are like water spilled upon the ground which cannot be gathered up. Few and evil are the days of thy servants; our life is but a span; we see the meanness of its duration and the poverty of its own resources, yet are we enslaved by fascinations which throw their spell upon us every day. We would that God would deliver us from all these bondages, and cause us to enter into the wide and glorious liberty of his Son. That we should ever have prayed this prayer is the miracle of our life, for we were dead in trespasses and sin, and our soul's delight was in the gardens forbidden, and in the trees that are interdicted, but now we are alive in Christ, and our soul's desire is to drink of the living stream, to pluck of the tree of life, and to do God's will

with hearty sincerity, with humble devoutness, with reverence that itself is worship.

Appoint unto us our task and give us strength to fulfil it all. When the burden is very heavy, do not lessen the load, but increase the strength. When the hill is very high and the wind is very bleak, and we are ill able to bear it, reduce nothing of the severity of the discipline, but increase in us that loving patience, that high hope, that gentle trust, which accepts everything at thine hand as right and wise and good.

Thou art teaching us many lessons, difficult to learn, hard to apply, yet which in the application turn to sweet gospels, even to resurrections and great deliverances. Thou dost take away the pride of our life, the delight of our eyes, the song of our souls. Thou dost make us poor indeed : thou sendest a bitter cold upon us, under which we shiver and tremble with agony : thou dost distress us by many troubles, thou wilt not allow us to keep the dear child—it is plucked like an unopened bud. When thou dost see us in the midst of our joy thou dost trouble our cup with bitterness—as for our fig tree, thou dost bark it and leave it naked—as for our one lamb, its loneliness is no protection against thy judgment ; thou dost take it away in the night time, and in the morning we are visited with infinite distress.

This is the life we live : we sing and curse and mourn and reproach, and there is no prayer found upon our lips, yet dost thou send unto us messages from heaven, yea last of all thou didst send thy Son, and he gave himself for us. We have been touched by the pathos of the cross, we have been moved by the entreaties of the dying Christ, we have found in him our one and only priest—now we would live in him, and for him and to him, and would be bound to his kingdom as willing and loving slaves. Amen.

Matthew ii. 16-23.

16. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men (mocked of God rather), was exceeding wroth, and sent forth (murderers), and slew all the children* that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts (suburbs or precincts) thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

17. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

18. In Rama (which lay on the way to Babylon) was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel (the progenitrix of Israel) weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

* "The number of those slaughtered on this occasion has been erroneously thought to be great, and the deed itself a horrible massacre, whereas, in the nature of things, there could be but a few children under two years in a little town like Bethlehem, and these might be put out of the way without any stir."—*Olshausen*.—With regard to the silence of Josephus respecting this massacre, Bishop Ellicott says :—"What, we may fairly ask, was such an act in the history of a monster whose hand reeked with the blood of whole families and of his nearest and dearest relations? What was the murder of a few children of Bethlehem in the dark history of one who had perchance, but a few days before, burnt alive at Jerusalem above forty hapless zealots who had torn down his golden eagle? What was the lamentation at Rama compared with that which had been heard in that monster's own palace, and which, if his inhuman orders had been executed, would have been soon heard in every street in Jerusalem?"—*Hulsean Lecture*, 1859.

19. But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

20. Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel (the *country* is divinely named; the particular *town* was humanly selected); for they are dead which sought the young child's life (literally the young child's *soul*).

21. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

22. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign (under the inferior title of Ethnarch) in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither; notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

23. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene (mean and contemptible, so the root of the word signifies).

LESSONS FROM CHILD-LIFE.

"**T**HEN Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men"—yet the wise men did not mock him at all! When will people get away from the region of secondary causes, and understand that life has a divine centre and that all things are governed from the throne of heaven? It is not only a philosophical mistake to drop into second causes for the purpose of finding the origin of our miseries, it sometimes, yea often, becomes a practical mischief, a sore and terrible disaster of a personal and social kind. Therefore with great urgency would I drive men away from secondary lines and intermediate causes, to the great cause of all—God, and King, and Lord, and Christ. Herod was mocked of *God*: he was not mocked of the Persian sages: they were not unwilling to ally themselves with him, so far as they were personally concerned, if they could contribute aught to his intelligence or to the carrying out of his expressed purpose to "worship" the Child of whom they themselves were in quest. Herod was mocked, vexed from heaven, troubled from the centre of things. The fog that fell upon his eyes came downwards, not upwards; it was a blinding mist from him who sends upon men delusions as well as revelations.

We have ourselves been mocked of God, and we have taken vengeance upon human instrumentalities. If we insist upon having our own way, there is a point at which God says, "Take it, and with it take the consequences." If we resolutely and impatiently say, "We will find success along this line and no

other," God may say to us, "Proceed, and find what you can." And at the end of that line, what have we found? A great rock, a thousand feet thick, and God has said, "You may find success if you will thrust your hand through that granite." So we have been mocked. We have determined to proceed along a certain course, notwithstanding the expostulations of heaven, and having gone mile after mile, what have we found at the end of the course? A great furnace, and God has said to us with mocking laughter, that has shaken the skies, "Your success is in the middle of that furnace: put your hand right into the centre and take it,"—knowing that he who puts his hand in there, takes it out no more.

In proportion, therefore, as we are mocked and vexed, as we come back from the wilderness, bringing with us nothing but the wind, as we return from the mountains bringing with us nothing but a sense of perplexity, it becomes us to ask serious questions about our failure. *Who* mocked us? Not men, not women—we were laughed at from heaven. There is no passage of Scripture which has upon me so weird an effect as that which says that God will mock at our calamity, and laugh when our fear cometh. We have seen his tears—they baptized Jerusalem, they have fallen in gracious showers upon the graves that hold our heart's treasure, but we have never heard his *laugh*. There is a human laughter that turns us cold—God forbid we should ever hear our Divine Father's laughter, when the great fire-waves swell around us and all heaven seems to be pleased with the discomfiture of our souls.

When Herod saw that he was mocked of the wise men, what did he? Let us suppose that the passage is interrupted at that point and that we are required to continue the story in our own way. Now let us set our wits to work to complete the sentence which begins with "When Herod saw that he was mocked of the wise men." Let me suggest this continuation—He saw a *religious mystery* in this matter, and said, "This is not the doing of the wise men, there is a secret above and behind and around this, which I have not yet penetrated: I am troubled, but it is with religious perplexity. I will fall down upon my knees, I will outstretch mine arms in prayer, and will cry mightily to God to visit me in this crisis of my intellectual distress and moral consternation." Let me now turn and see how far my conjecture is right. "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was

exceeding wrath, and sent forth and slew." The power of wickedness is *physical*, the power of goodness is *moral*. Wickedness says, "A sword;" goodness says, "A pen."

We know that this narrative is true in the case of Herod, because it is made true every day *in our own experience*. When we are vexed and mocked and disappointed, we do exactly what Herod did—we grow exceeding wrath, and slay. You need not consult the ancient historians to know whether Herod really did this work or not, when we ourselves are doing it every day of our vexation and disappointment. We all play the fool under such visitations. Not unless we are regenerated by God the Holy Ghost and cleansed through and through by the atoning blood do we rise to the high dignity and grandeur of moral dominion and spiritual conquest.

There are two victories possible to us, the one is physical, the other is moral. I want this child to attend public worship. I say to the child, "You *must*: if you refuse I will *scourge* you until you go to church. I am older, I am stronger than you are, and you shall feel the supremacy of my age and the oppressiveness of my strength. To church I will *make* you go." I have succeeded, the child is in the church to-day. The child is here, but not here! By a perverse will the child is turning this church into a desecrated place. The child's *will* is not here, nor is the child's *love* present with us: our prayers have been burdensome, and God's own word has lost its music, because of the constraint under which that attendance has been enforced.

Let me take the case of the child from another point. I have been dwelling upon the advantages of going to church; I have been speaking about God and God's love, Christ and Christ's cross, about the tender music and the beautiful word and the loving gospel, and I have said to the child, "I should like you to go: it would make my heart glad if you did go—I only *ask* you, I do not *force* you." And the child has said, "Certainly I will go; show me the way, I should be *glad* to go." The child is here, every blood-drop in his heart is here, his eyes are rounding into a great wonder, and his breast heaving with an unusual but most glad emotion. Which is the conquest? The conquests of force exhaust themselves and perish in ignominious failure, the conquests of love grow and increase with the processes of time.

When Herod saw that he was mocked of the wise men, he was exceeding wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem. The power of badness is *destructive*, the power of goodness is *preservative*. We need direction in the quality and uses of strength. It is easy to destroy: even a beast can crush a flower, but no angel in all the heavens can reset the broken joint. We mistake destructiveness as a sign of power. What power there is in the act of destructiveness is of the lowest and coarsest quality. You cannot drive evil out of men by any merely negative and destructive process. If you call out "Repent," you must immediately follow the word with "For the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The call to repentance is in a sense a negative call, the announcement that the kingdom of heaven is at hand is the positive and affirmative call, which tends to the upfilling of the emptied heart with the better dominion, the sanctuary from heaven. You may cut down all the weeds in your garden, but if you do not attend to that garden, putting in the place of that which was noxious that which is useful, the old roots will re-assert themselves and your garden will become a scene of confusion. Jesus does not destroy without creating. If we suppress anything we do not believe in, we ought to set up in its place influences of a higher and nobler kind. It is no use for you, my friends, to empty the public-house unless you open some other place that shall attract within its better limits those whom you have expelled. It is of no use you driving the devil out of a man unless you have something to put into the man. That devil will wander about and will return and bring with him seven worse than himself, and the end of the man will be worse than the beginning.

"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, mourning, lamentation, weeping," distress night and day, the cry of pain and the moan of agony. The result of selfishness is human distress, the result of goodness is good-will towards men. See then what the world would come to under a selfish rulership. Selfish rulership says, "If I cannot have my own way easily, I will have it at all costs and hazards." Selfish rulership lifts up its sword and says, "Make way." Selfish rulership will purchase its own ends at any costs of mourning, lamentation, and weeping.

Thus the bad man seems to succeed more than the good man; his way is rougher, his manners are ruder, he destroys, he does not create, and it is always easier to pull down than to build up. Jesus Christ proceeds slowly because of the depth and vitality and permanence of his work. It is easier to curse than to pray. Under Herod the world would become a scene of selfish triumph; under Christ it would become a family united by tenderest bonds, made holy by mutual and sympathetic love, and sacred by the exercise of those obligations which elevate and ennoble human nature. I ask you, therefore, to-day, as the end of this part of the exposition—who is to be King, Herod or Christ, violence or persuasion, force or love, selfishness or beneficence? The choice is sharp, the division is distinct: he who would seek to muddle and confuse these distinctions, is not the friend of progress, he is the victim of a mischievous pedantry. The world can only be under one of two kings, God—mammon, Christ—Herod, beneficence—selfishness. Choose ye; put high his banner over your life and let it float so that men can see it from afar.

In the next paragraph of our text we find the appearance of an angel of the Lord in a dream. The angels are ever mindful of the good. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be the heirs of salvation?" You say you have had no experience of angel ministry: be careful what you say, lest you narrow yourselves unduly by the mere letter, and miss the poetry and grandeur of your life. You say you are bound by things visible and palpable, and beyond those things do not venture to go. I am not asking you to venture to go any distance beyond those limitations, but I am asking you to allow God the power to come to you by any one of a series of innumerable ministries. You must not "limit the Holy One of Israel." The question is not, What can *I* do? It is, What can *God* do?

I could imagine a little boy with his arithmetic saying that all things that could be reckoned up, in space and in quantity, were reckonable upon the basis of his book of figures. He begins and ends with the multiplication table; he says the multiplication table ends at twelve times twelve, and beyond that he will never go. He is not going to be wise above what is written: if any man should venture to ask him how many are thirteen times thirteen, he would shudder with arithmetical aversion, and reply

that thirteen times thirteen was not to be found in the multiplication table. Would he be *right*? He would be as far *wrong* as possible! Thirteen times thirteen is as certainly in the multiplication table as twice one or five times five. He will find that out by-and-by. He thinks he is keeping himself within due limits and must not transgress certain boundaries, when he says the table ends at twelve times twelve. He is going to be arithmetically orthodox: other people may dream about thirteen times thirteen if they please, he thinks that enquiry involves a very grave responsibility; he shrinks from their society, and he betakes himself with renewed ardour to the four corners of the table that begins at twice one and ends at twelve times twelve. Is he arithmetically pious and arithmetically orthodox? He is arithmetically narrow and arithmetically bigoted and arithmetically foolish!

By-and-by he will advance further. I will say to him, "What is the square root of five-and-twenty?" And he will say, "Anybody knows that the square root of five-and-twenty is five." "What is the square root of *minus a*?" "Ah, I do not go into that sort of thing at all." "But there is a science which tackles questions of *that* kind." The boy replies, "I know nothing about it; I do not want to be wise above that which is written. I can give you the square root of one hundred in a moment, but the square root of *minus a*—he must be a very presumptuous and arrogant person to discuss such a question! If it be not presumptuous, which it appears to me to be, it is exceedingly foolish." He lives within his arithmetic, he does not know that there is another science just over it, which undertakes to find out sums by signs, and to discuss deep problems by letters and symbols that appear to be foolish to those who have never entered their higher education.

When I come to these angel ministries, they baffle me. I say "They are not in my arithmetic, they are not in the multiplication table." Let me never forget that algebra continues and perfects common arithmetic, and let me never forget that even beyond algebra itself are methods of calculation unknown to those who are in the lower ranges of human thought. I must not set up *myself* as the measure and bound of things. If the Bible comes to me with angel ministries, with assurances of what has been

done by angels and through the medium of dreams, by high efforts of the religious imagination, I must not play the boy-fool by saying that reckoning ends with twelve times twelve; I must remember that the universe is larger than I have yet imagined it to be, and that there are men who are older and wiser, and it is not for me to say God's ministry begins here and ends there. I love to live in an enlarging universe, I love the horizon which tempts me to touch it, and then vanishes to an infinite distance.

The angel of the Lord said, "They are dead which sought the young child's life." The good have everything to hope from *time*, the bad have everything to fear from it.

The bad man is in haste, the good man rests in the Lord and waits patiently for him. The bad man says, "It must be done now; my motto is '*ad rem*,'—now or never, strike the iron while it is hot, let passion have its way instantaneously." They that believe do not make haste, they are calm with the peace of God; they trust to time; they say, "All things will be fulfilled in the order of duration and the process of the suns." Innocence can wait. Innocence can go into any land and tarry there until sent for by the angel; innocence can go into any prison and wait not till helped by a butler, but until sent for by the king. If thou art innocent, be quiet; if thou art really good at the core, through and through, simple-minded, honest in motive, pure in purpose, high and sacred in ambition, wait; thy funeral will not be first.

Yet another fear fell upon the mind of Joseph. When he heard that Archelaus reigned in Judea, under the inferior title of Ethnarch, in the room of his father Herod, he was "afraid to go thither." There are some families of which we are afraid: there are whole generations that seem to be blighted with a common taint. There are some chains whose links are all bad. Joseph thought that Archelaus might inherit the prejudices and hostilities of his father. There was no need for him to do so. Thank God, a man may break away from his own family, a child may be a stranger to his own father. Thank God for these possibilities of beginning again. I see what is called *fate* in the order and destiny of men: I have taken hold of the chain and find it to be thick and strong—yet I see also the wonderful *liberties* of men, so that they can detach themselves from a

melancholy and shameful past on the part of others, and begin again, by themselves, under God's blessing and direction, for themselves. Was your *father* a bad man? You may be a good *son*. Fear not, do not droop under the blighting cloud. If it be in your heart to be better and you mention this purpose in prayer to God, your father's name shall rot, and yours shall be a memorial of goodness and hope, long as the sun endures.

They are DEAD which sought the young child's life. That is always the ending of wickedness: that is the history of all the assaults that ever have been made upon Jesus Christ and his kingdom. I have seen great armies of men come up against the young child, and behold they have perished in a night, and in the morning the angels have said to one another, "They are DEAD which sought the young child's life." I have seen armies of infidel books come up to put down Christianity, to expose it, and refute it and cut it to pieces, and destroy it as Herod's sword the children of Bethlehem, and lo, in twelve months not one of them could be found, and the angels have said to one another, "They are DEAD which sought the young child's life." I have seen critics come up with keen eye and sharp knife, and a new apparatus adapted to carry out its processes and purposes of extermination, and behold the critics have cut their own bones and died of their own wounds, and the angels have said, "They are DEAD that sought the young child's life." I have seen whole towns of new institutions, created for the purpose of putting down the Christian Church. All kinds of competitive buildings have been put up at a lavish expenditure, the preacher was to be put down, the Bible was to be shut up, the old hymn-singing was to be done away with, a new era was to dawn upon the wilderness of time, and lo, the bankruptcy court had to be enlarged to take in groups of new mendicants, for they DIED that sought the young child's life!

No man ever died who sought the young child's saving ministry: no man ever died who went to the young child and said, "My Saviour, thy grace is greater than my sin, pity me and lift me out of this deep pit by the hand of thy love." The angels never said about such a one, "He is dead who offered that prayer."

No dead man is found at the foot of the cross, they live who touch that tree, they are immortal who open their hearts to receive that baptism of blood, they are a triumphant host that take hold of hands around the young child.

He is always young; he is always in bloom. Time cannot wither him: as for custom it cannot "stale the infinite variety" of his ministry and his worship. God delights in youth: there is no wearying in the duration of goodness—wickedness runs down into exhaustion, goodness runs up into renewal of efflorescence and beauty, and eternal spring.

NOTES.

1. "December 25th was not kept as a festival in the East till the time of Chrysostom, and was then received as resting on the authority of the Roman church."—*Ellicott's Test.*

2. "Herod the Great.—Son of Antipater. An Idumean by an Arabian mother. Put to death his wife Marianne, and his sons Alexander and Aristobulus. Died in the 70th year of his age, the 38th of his reign, and the 750th year of Rome."

3. ARCHELAUS.—"Mother was Malthaké, a Samaritan. After a cruel and disturbed reign (under the title of Ethnarch) of about eight years he was banished to Vienna, in Gaul,—the modern Vienne. His dominions, including Samaria, Judea, and Idumea, then passed into the direct government of Rome."

Verse 22. "He turned aside."—"The English 'Anchorite' is derived from the Greek word in the original."

Verse 23. "He shall be called a Nazarene."—"The passage gains fresh interest from the fact that the early Christians were called Nazarenes in Rome. Acts xxiv. 5. For them it would be a point of triumph that their enemies thus unconsciously connected them with a prophetic title of their Master."

4. "THE CHILDREN OR DESCENDANTS OF HEROD THE GREAT mentioned in the New Testament are:—(1) Archelaus. (2) Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee, Matt. xiv. 1; Mark vi. 14; Luke iii. 1; xiii. 31; xxiii. 7; (3) Philip Tetrarch of Ituræa; Luke iii. 1. (4) Herod Philip, husband of Herodias, Matt. xiv. 3; Mark vi. 17. (5) Herod Agrippa, grandson of Herod (son of Aristobulus, one of the sons Herod put to death); Acts xii. (6) Agrippa II., son of No. 5; Acts xxv. 13. (7) Herodias, sister of No. 5; Matt. xiv. 3. (8) Salome, daughter of No. 7 (not *by name*); Matt. xiv. 6; Mark vi. 22. (9) Berenice and (10) Drusilla, daughters of No. 5; Acts xxv. 23; xxiv. 24."

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we know thee as a God of Love, and it is to thy pity that we now come with our praises and our prayer. We do not address thy righteousness, for thy purity makes us afraid with a great and painful fear : we come to thy mercy—thou hast been pleased to exercise mercy towards the sinful children of men. Through Jesus Christ our Saviour we know of this mercy ; he indeed is the mercy of God in human form, our Priest, our Saviour, our only Intercessor, mighty in all things, but mightiest in the intercession of his love. We would hide ourselves in Jesus Christ ; he is our safety, our security ; the rock that cannot be broken into by thief or robber, or overwhelmed by fiercest storm. Hide us in thyself, thou Rock of Ages, then shall we be safe for ever from fear of man, and from all other fear.

We have come with a great, broad, loud psalm in our heart, for our joy is great and our thankfulness unutterable in mortal speech. We look back and behold a great light : on either hand we look, and behold a rod and a staff, and if we venture to trespass and look for one moment into the future, there is no trouble there ; the clouds will roll away and the broad bright morning will shine upon our life. We wish to trust thee more, our desire is to go out of ourselves, to bid farewell to our own devices and defences, and to cast ourselves upon the wisdom and the protection of our Father in heaven. We have heard wonderful things of thee, we know they are all true, for we ourselves have tested them word by word, and are to-day thy living witnesses, showing forth the abundance of thy goodness and the sureness of thy promises. Thou hast dried our tears, thou hast recovered us from many a slip ; when the enemy has taken us in his strong snares, thou hast broken every one of them and blessed us with renewal of liberty. We have played the fool and prayed downwards instead of upwards, and our hearts have gone far astray from thee, yet has thy love been greater than our sin, thy grace has overflowed our guilt, and by the infinitude of thy mercy and thy love we have been brought back again from far-off places, and set once more within the warmth of our Father's house. We bless thee for all thy care. There is nothing too small for thee to look at. Thou governest the heavens and thou blestest little children. Thou lightest the lamps which flame across the universe, and thou dost make the lily beautiful in its quiet place. Thou numberest the hairs of our head, our tears thou dost put in thy bottle, our heart-throbs thou dost count one by one ; when the last pulsation comes, our immortality shall begin.

We have come to bless thee : this was our set purpose ; our one meaning was to lift up the psalm high as heaven, until it filled thine ear, and made thee glad with our filial love. We now commend ourselves to thy keeping. We would not live one day without thee ; we would live and move and have

our being in God. We would rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him ; we would have no desire that cannot be satisfied by his grace. Our hearts would be as temples of the Holy Ghost, in which the loving One reigns and rules with all the omnipotence of love. The Lord purify us by the blood of sacrifice, the Lord wash us in the holy, sacred stream that flowed from the Saviour's riven side, the Lord give us to know the mystery of pardon and the joy of adoption into his family.

We commend also unto thee all whom we love and for whom we ought to pray. As patriots we remember our country and say, God save the Queen, bless the land, make its harvest abundant and its commerce prosperous, and let all the people sitting at the table of plentifulness remember who spread the banquet, and praise the Lord with a life of love. We remember our sick ones, too, for whom we have prayed many a prayer, and for whom we seem to be unable to do aught that is really effectual for their bodily recovery. We can do more, and we do it now ; we pray that thy grace may be greater than their weakness, and that in their hearts there may be a sacred joy, a very rapture and song of triumph, a victory greater than all the distresses which make them weak.

We pray for those from whom we are separated for awhile, for our friends on the great wide sea—the Lord give the winds and the waves charge concerning them. For our loved ones in far away lands, for our sons and daughters in the colonies, for all for whom we ought to pray, of every class and name, the Lord bind us together in the bonds of a true love. Being one in Christ, may our fellowship be complete and lasting.

Let thy word dwell in us richly, let thy gospel come to us this morning as a singing angel, coming with sweet messages from thy heart, and may we listen to every tone and give broad welcome to every word from heaven. Amen.

REVIEW OF THE WHOLE CHAPTER.

THE second chapter of Matthew is a record of *trials*. Everybody engaged in the tragedy seems to have been pierced through and through with the same sharp sword. This is the more wonderful, seeing that the object of the chapter is to set up *the kingdom of heaven* amongst men. One would have supposed that with a purpose so lofty and so beneficent, the career would have been one perfectly clear of all difficulty, broadening like a dawning day, and offering to every one engaged a right hearty welcome, and crowning each toiler with a gentle and loving benediction. If the people engaged in this exciting narrative had been about to do something very *bad*, we would have followed their punishment with keen interest, and after each infliction of the deserved blow we would have said, "This is merited ; no man can do wrong and yet enjoy prosperity." But nothing of the kind is here. With one exception everybody wants to do what is

good so far as the kingdom of heaven is concerned, and yet every one engaged in this marvellous development of human history is smitten, pierced, thrown down, banished, or otherwise visited with some heavy and inexplicable penalty. This chapter is a record of trials, and these trials acquire a keener accent and a more painful significance from the fact that they all occur in connection with the establishment of a beneficent kingdom, whose avowed object is the salvation and holiness and infinite blessedness of all who accept its dominion.

There are trials purely *personal*, for example those of Joseph and Mary. Mary comes into the story by the pressure of an infinite destiny. She does not ask to be an actor in this scene—she is modest; violet-like she seeks the shade, she craves for no renown, she does not ask to be put in the fore-front of any battle or contest. Yet to pains of divers kinds is added the agony of misunderstanding and banishment, suspicion of the foulest kind, and abandonment by those who should have loved her most. This, in connection with setting up the Christly kingdom on the earth! Our narrow, short-sighted sympathy says she might have been *spared* this; an angel might have rolled a white cloud for her to sit upon as upon a throne. Instead of this, behold the severity of her lot, behold what unmerited punishment darkens her little patch of sky and makes her earth barren and desolate, without green thing or root of promise.

And Joseph, a negative character, a man who is in, and yet hardly knows why he is in, the story, sustaining an incidental and relative position to it, wholly secondary, almost yet not altogether needless,—even he is afflicted with great visions and great distresses, startled by unexpected ghosts, aroused from his sleep that he may be told to flee away as if he were an offender against human law and social decency. He must needs be up and flee like a thief in the 'night-time. And all this, in connection with introducing to the world the only Friend it ever had! These historical recollections would always be interesting to minds who study the unity of the human race, but they are more than interesting, they are religiously suggestive and comforting to those who remember that all these trials are repeated in the life of every honest man and woman to-day.

Then there were trials, *imperial* as well as personal. *Herod*

was troubled. Not Herod the individual man, but Herod the *king*. His throne, which had been steady as a rock, began to quake under him, and he said, "What ghost is shaking this firm seat?" He was distracted, his mind was split in two, he was in perplexity, in intellectual vexation—he could not bring the pieces together and shape them into coherence and meaning. He was a shrewd man, a man to whom councillors appealed in the time of their perplexity, a man high in authority, to whom was committed the giving of great decisions; and yet something occurred in his history which brought a great blinding mist over his eyes. He mistook distance, proportion, colour, he could see nothing as it really was; he rubbed his eyes to cleanse them of the mist, but it grew as he rubbed, and he was blinder at the last than at the first. And this, let us constantly remember, in connection with setting up a kingdom of light and peace, righteousness and love.

Instead of the king having the first revelation, and receiving that revelation as the earth receives the bright morning, he seems to have been left out of the count altogether. He stumbles into it, he does not walk lovingly and loyally into this inheritance. The revelation is a ghost, a flash of light, a rattle of thunder, a shaking of the throne, a darkening of the window, an overturning of the hot brain. Herod cannot speak coherently; all other questions have dwindled into commonplace or into trifles since this great enquiry thrust itself on his reluctant but startled mind. Hitherto he has sat on his throne or presided over his court, he has been attentive to every one, and has meted out justice with an even hand, with a balance that could not be tampered with. He has acted in a manner that claimed and secured the confidence of those who were round about him, but a question has arisen in his intellectual thinking which makes all other questions mean and covers them with infinite contempt. Since that question arose and gave direction and colour to his thinking, all the questions that he had hitherto thought to be great have fallen away from their eminence, and he can hardly command patience to consider and balance and decide the trifling enquiries. This again would be an interesting historical fact, if it were only confined to Herod himself, but it broadens into something greater, brightens into something more fascinating, when we remember that this trouble,

vexation, or pain is repeated in the case of every king and every country receiving or enquiring about the Son of God.

Surely the trials end here? We must now have come to the end of the black catalogue. The light will come now. As a faithful expositor of the Word, I must say, not yet can the light come. There were trials personal, as in the case of Joseph and Mary; there were trials imperial, as in the case of Herod the king: I have to add, in pathetic and distressing culmination, that there were trials *domestic*, as in the massacre of the innocents. "Herod was exceeding wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under." It was truly called the massacre of the innocents, it was making the many suffer for the one; it was a picture of the indiscriminate vengeance of excited and uncontrollable human nature. It was the thrust of a blind man who said, "I will strike who comes first, if haply I may strike the offender." Who can calculate the number of little ones slain by that fierce and cruel sword? Who can hear the mourning, lamentation, great weeping and distress? We stand a thousand years and more away from those desolated and depeopled homes; we can take with some comfort a tragedy two thousand years old, but that is to our shame and not to our honour. It is possible to set ourselves back along the historical line, far enough to sympathise with those whose children were given up to that unsparing sword. All this, let me say again, was in connection with the setting up of the kingdom of Jesus Christ upon the earth! A sword through his mother's heart, a shadow across the path of his reputed father, a king smitten by invisible lightning, troubled as with a cloud terrible with the presence of innumerable ghosts, homes made black because of the death of little children. All this was not in our reckoning. This never came into our dream. No poet dare have dreamt this poem; it would have damned his reputation. Truth is stranger than fiction, reality is hardly reached by poetry; when it is the highest poetry of all it is the most real, it touches heights which men call insanity.

What then have we, as Christian readers, to say about these trials in their relation to the kingdom of heaven? I have three things to say about them, and the first is that the kingdom of heaven, as represented by Jesus Christ, was *not responsible* for

them. It is a fine matter, is this allotment of responsibility. We are sometimes occasions without being causes. Who is responsible for the pain suffered by that poor man whose limb is being amputated at this moment? Do we say, "Cruel surgeon, why do you inflict such pain on a fellow creature"? We do not hold the surgeon responsible for the agony of the sufferer: he may be the occasion of it, but he inflicts agony that he may save from some greater distress. You must look into causes preceding the ministry of the surgeon; the limb was beginning to putrify—it was momentary agony or death, and the surgeon beneficently advised the infliction of transient pain. When he said, "Cut off the limb," he did not say it loudly or unfeelingly, he spoke the language of sympathy and beneficence. Let us know that in all our education and uplifting pain is unavoidable, because of the moral condition into which we have brought ourselves. When the father uses the rod upon the criminal child, does he inflict the pain cruelly? He inflicts it beneficently. If he loved less he would strike less, if he were less loving he would be less severe. His very severity is an expression of his pity and yearning love.

It is hard to understand this, it cannot be defended as a mere theory; it is not open to any discussion that could be conducted in words, but it comes up as a great fact in the swelling human heart, that sometimes we are obliged to prove our love by our severity. When the Son of God came into the world there was no room for him: he had to make room for himself, and sometimes when a tree makes room for itself it overthrows old walls and strong buildings—those silent, ever swelling roots thrust out the masonry of man.

This leads me to say, in the second place, that these trials were part of a *happy necessity*. All education is but another word for pain, trial, trouble, discipline. The education that comes otherwise may disappear as it came. We learn by pain, we advance by strange and often intolerable agonies, we cannot understand why our ignorance should be driven away only by processes that tear and wear the finest sensibilities of the soul. Look back upon your education: oh the headaches, the smartings, the disappointments, the troubles, the evasions; and yet the result of the whole is wisdom. Your will was curbed at every point, your little plans were turned upside down, you were made to know that you must

begin at this hour and work till that appointed time, or if not you must suffer the penalty. The tasks we had, the lines to commit to memory, the sharp visitations of the rod, the chidings and reproachings and scoldings and buffetings, the shamings with the uplifted finger of the mocking master, and yet now, somehow, it seems as if all these things worked together, being duly and lovingly controlled, to the formation of a massive and broad character not easy of destruction.

As civilization widens, trials multiply. You did not introduce the locomotive engine into civilization without a great massacre of innocents. When the locomotive engine took his breath and gave his first utterance into the startled air, what a slaughter there was all over the country of innocent speculators, innocent investors, innocent people of all kinds ! What vested interests went down, what arrangements of stabling and hostelry and hospitality of every kind were knocked on the head ! Every grand improvement in civilization means death as well as life, in proportion as a man or an improvement is great. No introduction can be effected into old habits or established upon old lines without great rending and tearing of things long-existent. No preacher could arise with any dominating power of light and wisdom without having to make room for himself and inflict pain upon many innocent people. He would not be otherwise admitted. He must come by fighting, battling, blood, fury, vehemence, for seven years be suspected and misunderstood and reproached, and only as the divinity is within him would he create his own space and liberty. His friends would be troubled, driven off into Egypt : all Herods would shake on their thrones, and innocent people of all kinds would be caught in a shower of stones. It is the mystery of civilization ; it belongs to the widening course of things ; it is true of all departments of life.

The third thing I have to say about these trials is that they imperfectly, yet definitely, represent the *greater trials of God* in the education and maintenance of his universe. He can do nothing without pain. He is tried every day. He builds a wall around his vineyard and sets up a tower in it ; and he comes at the appointed time to gather the grapes that he may crush them into wine for his heart's drinking, and behold the vineyard bringeth forth wild grapes. He nourishes and brings up children ; the ox

knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib ; but his children do not know, do not consider ; take their bread as if it had come from the earth, and not fallen from heaven ; drink their unblest water, and sleep an irreligious slumber. He looks on from the heavens with a great face of trouble, more marred than the face of any man. He cannot rule his children without being insulted every day. He cannot propose to add one beam of light to the glory which falls upon them without criticism that amounts to impiety, or without reproaches that add up to the sum total of blasphemy.

Let us not, then, suppose that these are merely historical trials, and that they have no counterpart in the current experience of the day or in the mysteries of the divine government of man. The glory of the New Testament is that it is new. I would not charge myself with boldness if I undertook to show that every line in this New Testament was printed only yesterday, so true is it to human life, so photographic of everything that is immediately round about us, so ardent with the warmth of our own life, so throbbing with all that is quick in our own pulsations. Hast thou read the New Testament as an old book, say sixteen or eighteen hundred years old ? I do not wonder that thou hast stumbled in many places and been caught in many a thicket, and in trying to disentangle thyself hast come to great difficulty and distress. I read the New Testament as just written, just put into my hands, printed afresh with the ink of heaven every morning, and sent down for the day's guidance. It is the part of the Christian preacher to freshen old histories, to throw upon them the dew of the morning, and make them sparkle with immediate light.

What is true of these trials, so far as the establishment of the kingdom of Christ upon the broad earth is concerned, is painfully and often insufferably true of the setting up of the kingdom of heaven in the *individual heart*. It is not easy to go over from Baal to Jehovah. Some of us are now only on the road, with the journey merely begun, though we have been five-and-twenty years endeavouring to take a step or two. Could I address some dear young heart looking upon these statements as great mysteries, that heart would say to me, "Oh, you must be such a happy man, you are free from all these trials and bitternesses, and are already in Beulah's fair land, blest with the spirit of peace, lighted with

the glories of heaven, far above the cold winds and darkening fogs. You have accomplished the journey." To that sweet speech I should make a frank reply. For days, and weeks, and months, dear child, I know not what joy is. Sometimes I feel as if I were worse now than I ever was in my whole Christian life before. My wonder is that I am not damned and put out of sight. God has hard work with me: it is difficult for him to build his temple in such a heart as mine: the devil will not let me lay one stone upon the top of another without trying to throw it down, the enemy will not let me get one whole prayer right clear out of me—he stands at my mouth to prevent the word, to twist the prayer. Whilst I am in my highest moods of communion, he whispers to me with hot breath, "What a fool you are: this is mockery, this is emptiness: take your prayer back, you impious idiot, and use your breath for other work." Still the kingdom of heaven is going on in my heart; other voices say, "Cheer thee; thy way is one of tribulation, but the end is peace. Fear not, they that are for thee are more than all they that can be against thee. God will accomplish his purpose little by little, but he will have the victory. Great are they that are against thee, greater they that are for thee. Hold up thy head, fear not, the angel will break the power of the enemy, and out of thy distress shall come thy joy."

These words fall on the breaking heart with infinite healing, and comfort me with a sure hope. By-and-by we shall say to some watcher, fairer than the morning light, "What are these arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" He will answer, "These are they that came out of great tribulation." Tribulation is another word for education if rightly accepted. Let me, then, cheer you and cheer myself. It is a hard fight, the trials are thick on the ground, the air is black with them, but we shall be "more than conquerors through him that loved us." Be this your motto: "*The Sword of the Lord—and Forward!*"

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, our voice is lifted up to thee in praise and thanksgiving, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, because of all thy tender mercy and thy loving kindness shown unto us since we last assembled here. Thou dost lead us by ways that we know not, and unexpected answers dost thou give to our trouble and our want. We look back to behold a long line of light : that line is thy love, thy care, thy patience ; and as we look forward we behold a long line of golden promise and tender assurance, so that we have no fear clouding and darkening our hearts. This is the Lord's doing, this is the gift of heaven, this is the revelation of God's love to our life, though it be dark, dark with sin and vexed with many cares. What time we are afraid, we put our trust in God ; when the sky is black, we know that the sun is still there, and that no force but thine can shake that source of light. Help us to know that the troubles of this life are for a moment, but as their season is short, so their visitation is often sharp. May we put our trust in thy love and righteousness and tender care, and be quiet, though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.

Thou hast written thy testimony in our life, thou hast proved thyself every day of our individual history. Thou hast made us and not we ourselves, we are the people of thy pasture and the sheep of thine hand. Thou knowest our frame, thou rememberest that we are dust ; every bone thou didst fashion, our reason thou didst set upon its throne, our whole life is brightened by the light of thy presence, and as for the troubles which vex and divide us, behold thou dost so direct them as to bring joy out of our greatest sorrow. What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us ? We will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord, yea, with loudness as men call who are burning with the fire of earnestness. We will not restrain our song before God, but with loud hallelujahs will we praise thee for thy wonderful care, thy continual mercy.

We come always to Jesus, because he is the same yesterday, to-day, for ever,—always full of love, full of pity, full of thought for our whole life. He died for us and rose again ; he is our Saviour ; and he is our intercessor ; for us he shed his blood, for us he breathed away his heart in priestly prayer. We have no other Saviour ; we need no other. His blood is our answer to thy law, his cross the sanctuary of the soul when pursued by its guilt.

We bless thee that we are in thine house, for it is good to be here. Thou dost cause a great calm to fill the sanctuary, and the spirit of peace speaks to the sons of peace, and having fellowship one with another, and with our common Father great love floods the soul. Forgetting earth and time and

dreary sense, we already claim the heritage bought for us by our Saviour Christ. Enjoying this opportunity of communion with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, may we return to the family, to the market-place, to all the daily engagements of life, with renewed purity of soul, elevation of purpose, and breadth of charity, accepting our little life as a great opportunity, and diligently working with both hands, not as hired servants, but as loving sons.

Set up thy kingdom within our heart—call it kingdom of God, kingdom of heaven, kingdom of light, kingdom of truth—we shall know it by what name soever it is called, for it will absorb all other masteries and rule us with infinite and gracious dominion. Help us to see the best of one another, teach us to read each other's life in the light of divine hope and redeeming love, fill our hearts with the very love of Christ, and may we prove discipleship by the cross.

Thou knowest the need of every heart, the pain of the wounded spirit, the joy of the delivered soul, the song of those who have great hope, and the purpose of those whose to-morrow is bright with great gladness. The Lord come to us according to our varied necessities, and according to the want or the joy of each heart, let thy blessing be measured unto us. When our purpose is evil, turn our counsel upside down with a ruthless hand; when our aim is good, help us to accomplish our whole purpose. Break the arm that is lifted in rebellion against light, truth, beauty, holiness, and all heavenliness of love and purpose.

The Lord give strength unto those whose desire it is to make the world gladder day by day. The Lord look upon the old man whose life is behind him, and speak some gospel of hope to his waiting soul. The Lord speak to the young man that he may estimate the number of his days and their brevity, and work in the spirit of the solemn responsibility. The Lord look upon the missionary at home, the loving mother, the gracious parent, the one who sacrifices herself for her children, and loves them with unutterable affection. The Lord look into the nursery, into the cradle, into the school, among all our young and loved ones, and baptize them with the dew of the morning. The Lord be the physician in the sick chamber, and bear his own gospel to hearts that can listen to no human tongue. The Lord's light brighten over the whole heavens until there be no shadow left. Amen.

Matthew iii. 1-6.

1. In those days (thirty years after the events of Chapter II.) came (*cometh*) John the Baptist, preaching (after the manner of a *herald*), in the wilderness of Judæa (bordering on the Jordan and the Dead Sea),

2. And saying, Repent ye (change your mind and purpose) : for the kingdom of heaven (a phrase used by Matthew about thirty times, and by him only in the New Testament) is at hand (has come nigh).

3. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4. And this same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins ; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

5. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round

about Jordan (the whole length of the river valley, including parts of Perea, Samaria, Galilee, and Gaulonitis).

6. And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

THE PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

IF you read the last verse of the second chapter—"And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene," and then read the first verse of the third chapter—"In those days came John the Baptist"—you might suppose that the two events followed one another within a very brief interval, whereas the fact is that *thirty years* intervened between the last verse of the second chapter and the first verse of the third. The heart is sad at that thought: we do not want the historian to take such wide leaps; we want him to take us down to Nazareth, and give us almost daily glimpses into that obscure but wondrous home. We long to overhear somewhat of the conversation that passes amongst its inmates; especially do we want to look at one with a human face, brightened often with divine flashes, and to listen to a voice like our own, yet much unlike it, so rich, so varied, so tender in pathos, so royal in command. Yet we stand here, at the opening of the third chapter (with one glimpse given by another writer,) with thirty years overleaped in silence that is to the imagination provoking.

"In those days came"—literally "in those days *cometh*," as if all the movement were continuous, without break or gap, as if there were no past tense, as if we lived in a perpetual present, as if history were a continuous breathing, not a succession of shocks, but a perpetual outgo of the divine purpose and the heavenly will. We have broken up our grammar so that we now have present, past, perfect, pluperfect, and future, but there is another grammar in which there is but one mood and one tense, and it is Christ's purpose to draw us up into his own thinking, until all history and all developments, the whole sweep and current of things, shall be to us a living indicative. You go back to take up the past, you break life up into sections, you cut it up into parentheses, you vex the flowing narrative with foot-notes and marginalia, so that I am lost in this wondrous history of the race. He calms me by completing me, withdraws my attention from

fractional times and momentary incidents, and fixes it upon the infinite oneness of the divine purpose and way.

In those days came John the *Baptist*. A *transient* name. The Baptist must die, the Congregationalist, the Presbyterian, the Episcopalian must die—his very *name* is indicative of the transientness of his coming and purpose. No man can be known by any one little accent of his case throughout immortality. When a man is so specialized the meaning is that his mission is here and gone, whilst you are speaking about him—a breath, a shock, a voice, an echo, a vacancy. Do you still follow the Baptist? Poor laggard, what business hast thou, in this nineteenth century, with following the Baptist? He himself said his mission was introductory, symbolical, a plunge, and all was over. Why art thou still dogging his steps, as if he had aught to give thee? He has eaten up the locusts and wild honey, and his raiment and his leathern girdle are worn out and are not worth thy picking up. O haste thee to catch his Master.

Still, John had a mission, and a great one; and it will be our object to measure it in future expositions. John the Baptist came *preaching*—a term but little understood. There are few preachers, and ought to be few. There are too many who bear the name who do not understand the vocation. He is not a preacher who stands in one place year after year, talking to the same people, and overfeeding them with intellectual luxuries. Preaching, in the New Testament, is a term which means *heralding*, going up and down from east to west, crying, shouting, with a ringing voice, "Prepare!" He is the preacher who does so, who breathes through the herald's trumpet, and startles the stagnant air with shattering blast, and says, "The King! the King!" In our days we have degraded preaching into bending the head over a sheet of ill-written paper and mumbling it with very uncertain emphasis. In the New Testament the preacher is the shouting man. We do not like shouting; we object to exclamation; but the true preacher is the *vox clamantis*. "Prepare! look out! attention!" After the preacher of course will come the teacher, the pastor, the expositor, the man whose business it is to stand in one place and unfold the infinite riches of the divine wisdom; but the preacher—defining that term in

the light of the New Testament—is a herald, a man who has a proclamation in his hands, whose sermon is brief because not a speech well composed and elaborate, but a cry, as of a man who should call “*Fire*” to a sleeping town.

“In those days came John the Baptist, saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The cry of all widening civilization has been *Repent*. Do not be startled with the word, as if it were a church term and a Bible word only; it is a word you cannot do without in the history of secular civilization. Do not sneer at the preacher when he says “Repent,” as if he had picked up a fanatical word and were using it for fanatical purposes. What is the meaning of this word *repent*, as used in this connection? The meaning of it is, Change your purpose, alter your mind, turn round, face about, you are on the wrong road, *return*! It is the utterance of men who have a new proposition to make in politics, in commerce, in engineering, in all the ways and processes of advancing life. He who corrects the thinking of his age, having verified his own conclusions in privacy, comes forth and says to his era, “Repent, you are wrong, change your mind, alter your standpoint.” When the word is taken up into the religious sphere, and invested with its vital meanings, it still continues the first signification, and enhances that signification with other meanings deeper and grander still. When a man repents of his sin, he knows the bitterness of inward sorrow, his heart weeps blood, his soul is afflicted with grievous distress on account of sin. Then the repentance expresses itself in an outward change of standing, attitude, and relationship, coming up out of an inward conviction wrought through infinite pain, and by ministries for which there are no words.

John’s, then, was not a very *cheerful* ministry, or a very popular or comfortable one. It is pleasanter for me to come down to any assembly and say, “I approve all your doings, I confirm your proceedings, I endorse your policies, Heaven’s blessing shine upon you like a summer day!” He who comes with a speech of that kind to the populace, will, for the time being, be the popular idol. To come into the midst of a city, or to go up and down a land, crying “Repent,” is to excite the most desperate prejudice. Who are you? Why this challenging tone? *quo warranto*? Prove your standing: whence came you, what is the measure of your

responsibility? Then will come insinuations as to sinister motive, and implications of dishonest or selfish purpose. Then the *tu quoque* will be the weapon of the hour. The man whose little sermon is "Repent" sets himself against his age, and will for the time being be battered mercilessly by the age whose moral tone he challenges. There is but one end for such a man—"off with his head." You had better not try to preach repentance until you have pledged your head to Heaven.

The *negativeness* of this ministry accounts for what is popularly termed the want of *success*. John's ministry was to clear the ground; he was a pioneer, he was a herald, he was one whose work was more or less of a negative kind, or introductory at the best. Such men do not add up to much in the sum total of vulgar arithmetic. When they are added up into their total by *God* himself the sum is not inconsiderable. We have reformers amongst us whose business it is to get men into a state of mind to hear the gospel. Having heard the gospel and received it, the men who conducted the introductory ministry are too often forgotten, as though they had done next to nothing. Your business, it may be, is to go out and persuade a man to alter his personal habits and his social relationships so as to bring himself within the sound of the Christian gospel. He comes to hear the minister; the minister, baptized with fire and clothed with zeal, arrests the man, and makes him a prisoner of the law. It may be that your outside and comparatively negative work is forgotten by men, but God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and labour of love. Yours is a preparational ministry; yours is introductory, and because introductory, more or less transient in its public effects and fame. Nevertheless it is a ministry without which the Church cannot live. Persevere through good report and through evil report, and come not to Time's low counter for your pay, but to the judgment-seat of Christ.

Consider well what it is to preach the gospel of repentance. I would rather preach the gospel of *comfort*; it would suit me personally better to say to every man who hears me, "You are altogether right: all you need is comfort, the kiss and seal of holy peace. Cheer you; it will be well with you." To stand before any man, and say to him, "If we are to make solid work we must begin with the fact that you are as bad as you can be" is to excite

prejudice and to create tremendous, if not insuperable, difficulty. Here is the disadvantage of the preacher; he has always to challenge his hearers, charge them with want of integrity; his indictment is heavy, every count of it rising above every other count before it in the gravity of its impeachment. The lecturer comes before you with his kid gloves and scented arrangements, and tells you how delighted he is to have the opportunity of speaking to so large, enlightened, and influential an assemblage. The preacher stands up and says, "Repent;" and who likes to listen to a man whose voice is a charge, whose sentences are thunderbolts? Yet through this ministry of repentance we must all pass ere we can enter into a ministry of reconciliation, and enjoy the infinite calm of God's own peace.

Yet John's ministry was not wholly negative. There is a positive element in it, and that should be carefully noted. He said, indeed, "Repent ye," but his deliverance did not end there. He added a reason, "for, or because, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Do not charge your hearer severely, so as to overwhelm him with intolerable sorrow. Having brought him to his knees in penitence, and broken his heart with contrition, and left him without a rag with which to cover the nakedness of his iniquity, tell him that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, intimating that his repentance is a sorrow that brings joy, that repentance is an introductory necessity, that it endures for a night, and joy cometh, bringing with it its own morning, a day that never dips into the darkness of eventide. So this heroic preacher, so severe, so terrible in aspect, so piercing and rending in voice, has a sweet, sweet tone—"The kingdom of heaven is at hand. The morning cometh, the summer dawns, the rain is over and gone, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land. Attend, repent, change, turn round—for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." A challenge of moral integrity should always be associated with the presentation of a great opportunity. Tell a man to repent only, and leave him there, and you put a dart into his breast. Tell him to repent, and add that the kingdom of heaven, with all its light and healing and redemption, is at hand, and you preach to him something like a complete gospel. The indictment associated with the word repentance must be followed with the inspiration connected with the term, the kingdom of heaven.

"This is he that was spoken of by the prophet." Every preacher who deeply moves his age is a fulfilment of prophecy. The great man is always *to come*. History is a process of daily fulfilment of prophecy. We are always startled with conformations of the Divine Word, and when the right man comes, there is something about him which indicates his reality. My sheep know my voice. When a man hears the truth, there is something within him which says, "So it is." I may resent what you say to me, may put my imagination to great stress, for the purpose of getting up excuses and pleas in reply to your charges, when you accuse me of being guilty before God, yet all the while, deep down in my self-reproachful heart, I feel that you are right, and that my palliations do but add to my sin.

What was the *result* of this man's preaching, so far as this section of the history will enable us to judge? There went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan. See the power of *one* consecrated and burning heart. John was one—the whole valley of the river was shaken by his voice, and men poured around him from every quarter. Believe in *individuality* of labour, believe that you, solitary thinker, lonely teacher, preacher, reformer—that you in your solitariness may have the power given you of God, of moving a whole age and inspiring a whole nation. Take the large view of your mission; do not be behind the very chief of the apostles, not in your own conceit, but in your interpretation of the breadth and grandeur of the divine call. Everywhere do I read of great results attending one man's ministry. One man is sometimes an army, one man is sometimes a congregation. Despise not the two and the three; there is a religion which can condescend to bless meetings of twos and threes: consider that condescension is a proof of the divinity of the doctrine. That which is artificial works for the artificial, that which is real works for the human, the vital, the image of God. To-day we call out for thousands to hear us, and if the thousands are not there we think but little of the few who gather in the house of God. If we were in right mood of heart we should see in every little child an opportunity for preaching with all the fire that could burn in the heart of the most consecrated patriot or a twice-anointed minister of God.

Get away from the baptism of John as soon as you can. We

are not always to be standing in introductory rites and ceremonial observances. Again and again would I say that the ministry of John was by its very constitution a temporary and not a permanent ministry. Is it possible that there are men and women amongst us to-day squabbling with one another about the matter of baptism? With what baptism you have been baptised I care not—if you have been baptised with the dew of the morning, sprinkled by hands prelati, or archiepiscopal—care not if you have been plunged in the middle of all the great seas that roll round the earth. Such baptism is nothing if it has not been followed by the true baptism of *blood* and *FIRE*. Into what baptism, then, have we been baptised? I believe that a sound argument can be set up in favour of the suggestion that in Christian baptism since the apostolic days there is *no water at all*. It does not follow that you must have water in order to have baptism, but, my friend, if you want the Atlantic have it: if the drop of dew trembling on the rosebud will suffice you, take it, but they are both nothing but ritualism, ceremonialism and superstition, if you do not seize the inner meaning, cry for the laver of blood, and mightily implore God to visit you with the baptism of fire.

See that the baptismal water does not freeze upon you, and encrust you as with ice, and make a bigot of you. The one baptism of which all other baptisms were indications, types and symbols, is the baptism of blood and the chrism of fire.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, our mouth is filled with thanksgiving, because our heart is stirred with gratitude. Thou hast done great things for us, and most wonderful; therefore is our mouth opened in praise, therefore are our hands stretched out to thee in the offer of loving service. Thou hast beset us behind and before and laid thine hand upon us, and thine eye has gleamed from heaven like a great sun, shining upon all our way, bringing us continual light and hope. Thou hast lifted us above our fears, so that the clouds have rolled under our feet, and we have seen thy bright blue morning spreading over our whole destiny like a father's blessing. Thou art great, thou art kind, thy name is mercy, thy ministry is love. These things have we learned in our heart in its deep pain and want, and having learned them, we would turn them into religious hymns and continual and delightful service. Thou art our God, and we have none beside; thine hand is the treasury of our almightiness, and in thine heart is hidden the gospel of our salvation. We will look unto the hills whence cometh our help; we will repair to the Saviour's cross in the time of infinite distress on account of sin, and through his most precious blood, shed for the sins of the whole world, our guilt shall receive the answer of thy forgiveness.

We bless thee for this uplifted cross, a tree higher than all forests, a spectacle that makes all other sights dull and poor—the great tragedy of thy love. To that tree we come: its leaves are for the healing of the nations, and other healing for the heart of man there is none. This is the Lord's doing; may we within its span be in the Lord's spirit, lifted up in heart, made ecstatic in joy, having around us all the sweet bright ministry of holy hope. Being delivered from every fear, freed from every snare, and delivered from every perplexity, may our souls become filled with thy joy and soothed and calmed by thy peace.

We mourn our sin: 'tis our daily cry; we have done the things we ought not to have done, we have left undone the things that we ought to have done—the Lord's mercy be multiplied unto us, and all the ministry of Christ be sent to our aid. Let us every one hear the utterance of thy forgiving love, let the most burdened conscience be delivered from its load, let the wounded and crying heart be healed of its pain, and over all the assembly may there pass the assurance of thy pardon, and may there return upon our life the lifting up of the light of thy countenance.

We bless thee for all thy blessings: they are in our individual life, for thou hast continued unto us health and strength and reasoning power and hope within the limits of this present scene. Thou hast blessed us in basket and in store, so that our trade has brought profit and our merchandise has yielded us a living. Thou hast given us favour in the sight of the people, so that our foothold in society is not lost. Thou hast saved us from many a temptation

and delivered us from many a gin and snare, so that our feet walk in the ways of freedom and we breathe the air of liberty. Thou hast blessed us in the family ; the father and the mother and the child are here, reunited, returned to one another, in the grace and fulness of thy protection. The Lord continue all household mercies to us : spare the elder and the younger, may there be no vacant chair, no empty heart, no desolated spirit. Where thou hast sent thy bereaving providence send thine all-healing grace ; where thou hast but now dug the deepest grave ever dug in the heart, the Lord fill it up with flowers, and so set upon it the sign and seal of a sure, glorious resurrection. Where the house is dark, do thou kindle an unexpected fire ; where the life is impoverished, do thou come with all thy treasure about it.

The Lord heal the wounded, the Lord carry the tired in his arms, the Lord bless the unblest, and send dew upon the withering flower. Thou knowest us every one, our ancestry, our difficulties, our temptations, our temperaments—peculiarities which distinguish us one from the other. Thou knowest all that is in us and about us—be the God of each life, the Saviour of each heart, the friend of each pilgrim.

Give thy word mighty wings to-day, that it may fly farther than ever : make the voices of thy servants sweeter than trumpets of silver and louder than shocks of thunder, and let thy word be heard everywhere, awakening and gladdening the hearts of men.

Pity us in our littleness and infirmity, make the way down to the grave as easy as thou only canst, and may the farewells of earth have in them tones subtle and tender, suggesting reunion in heaven. Amen.

Matthew iii. 7-12.

7. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation (brood) of vipers, who hath warned (taught) you to flee from the wrath (a *kingdom* to some, a *wrath* to others) to come ?

8. Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance :

9. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to (*as*) our father : for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. ("God is not tied to the law of succession in the church.")

10. And now (already) also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees (the Jews : the Gentiles were *stones*) : therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.

11. I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance ; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear : he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire :

12. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner ; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

JOHN'S PREACHING (*continued*).

THIS is a wonderful, yet not difficult, change of tone in the speech of such a man as John the Baptist. His baptism was the sensation of the day. Everybody seemed to have more or less

interest in it. Not to have heard it was to be misinformed or wanting in information, and not to have partaken of it was to have missed a great opportunity. All the valley of the Jordan was moved, people poured in from every centre, great and small, in order that they might hear this new prophet, for a prophet had not appeared in Israel for five hundred years. Curiosity was touched, wonder was on the alert, national pride was excited, and a great and hardly expressed hope was moving the ambition of the people.

For a long time John seems to have pursued his baptismal course without interruption, and indeed with some signs of satisfaction. There went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins—not, I imagine, confessing their sins in a minute and detailed manner, but generally acknowledging that they were not as good as they ought to have been, pleading guilty to a certain great, broad, general indictment, which all men probably over the civilized world are not unwilling to do. This was enough, as a starting point, in the case which John the Baptist represented. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, the great and leading men of the day, pure in their own estimation, not needing any such ministry as he came to conduct, except in an official and ceremonial manner, it changed his tone; he cried aloud with piercing and ringing voice, “O brood of vipers, progeny of serpents, deceitful, cunning, malignant, empoisoned, how do you account for being here? Who hath warned you, called you, who hath entitled you to avail yourselves of this opportunity?”

John was a man who recognised the possibility of people coming to religious ordinances from wrong motives. The people to whom he spake did not come for purely religious purposes at all. They thought the baptism was something to be passed through in order to realize a great end. They accepted it as a little ceremonial, preceding some great national endowment or fulfilment of long delayed prophecy. John startled them, therefore, with the tidings that this was a religious ordinance, and that men can only avail themselves satisfactorily of religious ordinances in proportion as they come to them with religious motives.

Are the Pharisees and the Sadducees of the olden time the only people who have come to church through wrong motives? Is it

possible that any of us can ever go to a holy place with unholy intent, or with a purpose infinitely below the grandeur of the opportunity? When I ask the questions I kill myself. Do I pierce any of your hearts, or wound, ever so slightly, any of your consciences? Whatever is religious must be touched religiously, or it will yield no true benefit or profit. You are not to touch the Bible as literary men, you are not to come to church as clever men, you are not to sit bolt upright as those who have a claim to judge in God's sanctuary. The true attitude is abasement, the spirit is contrition, the desire is a yearning for a purer and broader life. "To this man will I look—the man that is of a humble and contrite heart, and that trembleth at my word." The haughty he will bow down, the wise he will confound and disappoint. He will look to the eager heart, the gentle, simple yearning spirit whose one object is to know God's will and to try to do it.

When men come to religious ordinances, they should be warned of the meaning of the action which they wish to accomplish. They should have a clear and most intelligent conception of the whole purpose of religious worship. It is the business of the heralds of the cross and the ministers of the truth to give this warning, to keep back those who have not the right credentials. This is a kingdom that can only be entered by one right, the right of sin, avowed, confessed, deplored. Blind man, your blindness is your certificate, you want no other. Broken-hearted, wounded man, your contrition or your penitence is your credential; seek for none beside. Weary, tired soul, altogether overborne and distressed by the burdens and difficulties of life, your weariness is your claim. Do not try to get up your strength. When you lie flat in your weakness, your attitude is most acceptable to Heaven. To try to gain your breath that you may appear with some decorousness in his presence is to enhance your sin. To come panting, heaving, out of breath, gasping, dying—that is the guarantee of a good hearing in the presence of God.

How comes it that people so little profit by religious ordinances? Because they are too clever, too wise, too conceited, too good, in their own estimation. I never heard Pharisees and Sadducees praise with religious gratitude any service they ever attended. They, mighty men, confer an honour, they add lustre to the altar, they lift up the church in which their self-vaunting supplications are

uttered. How then can they, who are so full of themselves, who are enriched with the emptiness of their own self-satisfaction, gain any spiritual advantage from any church they ever entered? They do not go to church to get benefit, but to give it. Their purpose is to lay a flattering hand upon the infinite, and to bless it with the paw of their consecration. We should have been richer men to-day, broader and more massive in all religious instruction, intelligence, and force, if we had come with a true humbleness and bent down before God with an utter, absolute sense of unworthiness in his sight.

Surely he was a wilderness-trained man who spake thus to the high citizens of the day. Look at him, with his camel's hair and the leathern girdle about his loins, fed with locusts and wild honey. When he speaks, he will speak honey, but only in his speech to self-satisfied men there will be less honey than locusts. Upon some men you cannot confer any social advantage. They do not want it. What can I do for you, poor Diogenes, living in your tub? Nothing, but stand out of the light. The religious man ought never to be one to whom no favour can be shown. A man who can live in the wilderness, read the literature of the everlasting hills, and decipher the poetry of the skies, asks for no favour, can stoop to receive none; his is a marvellous independence of all social patronage and help. "Do not offend the Pharisees and the Sadducees, conciliate them, conceal as much as you can; they have it in their power to do great things for you." Such might have been the speech spoken to this man with the camel's hair and the leathern girdle, fed on locusts and wild honey; but he would have hurled it back again in shattering accents of scorn. So the religious teacher has it in his power to lift himself high above the line of patronage and the line of obligation, for religious men should be able to live upon nothing. Every true teacher of God should have bread to eat that the world knoweth not of, so that when men who misunderstand his mission come to him and say, "Let us hear your sermon, and then you shall have the loaf," he should be able to decline the loaf, to preach his discourse, and to vanish into the wilderness.

This gospel of Christ, either in its prophetic outlines, or in this transient dispensation of the Baptist, or in its full revelation in Jesus Christ, has never sought to make itself a popular religion in

the sense of bowing down hopefully before thrones on which were seated kings that could confer advantages upon it. Its fierce, all but savage, independence always strikes me with infinite force. When the Pharisees and the Sadducees came to the baptism of John, he said, "You are a brood of vipers." He called them by their right name. We dare not use such names now, because we do not live in the wilderness, we live in a city; we are not clothed with camel's hair and a leathern girdle about our loins, we have now gown and bands and a silken girdle, therefore we must be very complacent with the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and with people who are socially tall. I heard a fine and most prosperous gentleman say that he entered a London church once and only once, because in the course of the service the minister called some person who had been acting vilely—a wretch. "For that reason I have shut up the Bible—I heard a man call the most respectable citizens of his day a brood of vipers, a progeny of serpents, a nest of evil things. And I heard another man call a king a fox, and others he called whited sepulchres, hidden graves, actors, masked men." The age of free, clear, grand speech is dead: we have come into the age of euphemism. He is now the bold man who so utters his sentences that nobody can quote them, who so rounds and oils them that it is impossible to retain them in the grasp. The old grit is lost, the old free piercing speech is gone; we have alighted upon silken times, and hard words would not become the lips that cannot live but on the rich man's viands. We now say, Beware of phrases!

Though the gospel has never endeavoured to make itself popular in the sense of conciliating those who might confer patronage upon it, yet it has always welcomed with infinite pathos the hearts that felt their need of its redemption. No broken heart was ever turned away from the cross, no weary and overborne soul was ever discouraged by the Son of God. No poor bent woman, having nothing left but her touch of faith, was ever spurned by God's dear Son. He resents our fulness, not our poverty: it is when we are great he has nothing to say to us, not when we are little in our own esteem.

It is everywhere made clear in these Scriptures, that in coming for divine blessings we must renounce all human satisfactions. Nothing but emptiness can be heard at the divine bar. John

gives a hint of this grand condition of entrance into the divine kingdom when he says, "Think not—literally plume not yourselves—by saying, We have Abraham for our father. This is a kingdom that knows nothing of these intermediate and transient relationships, this is not a kingdom of great families, it is a kingdom of humanity." Therefore, for John the Baptist, trained in the wilderness, to come up amid all these glittering things, and to lay down this doctrine of the kingdom of heaven being founded upon humanity, was a miracle then—it is a commonplace now, because we have had full instruction upon gospel principles and purposes. But in John the Baptist's day to lay down this grand doctrine—here is a kingdom not for special families and particular kindreds, but for all the wide world—that was a consummation of all the miracles as well as a fulfilment of all the prophecies.

How difficult it is to break a man's prejudice when it rests upon considerations of the kind which John refers to. A man had Abraham to his father, therefore, he wildly reasons, it will be all right with him whatever may happen in the world. Christianity aims a destructive blow at all such pretences. This is the last fibre of badness. You cannot take out of some men a claim to God's favour, because of something ancestral or official represented by their individual life. Blessed are they who never heard of Abraham as compared with those who turn their Abrahamic ancestry into a prejudice against the divine kingdom or a condition of entering it. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who can say—

"Just as I am—without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee—
O Lamb of God, I come."

Who can reach this high degree of self-renunciation? Who can deliver himself from the prejudice that he has some claim to God's favour because his father built a church, because his father was a minister, because in his family religion has always had a place of consideration? Every one of us has to go before God as if his father had never lived, so far as the patronising of churches and religious sentiments is concerned. All false grounds of hope must be destroyed. God is able of these stones to raise up children

unto Abraham—which may be paraphrased thus : Do not suppose that God is dependent upon you for an ancestry, for a progeny, for a religious fame, or the nucleus of a divine kingdom. If you were all swept out of the earth to-day, he could have a family ten thousand strong to-morrow out of the pebbles that lie in the river's bed or on the face of the wide desert. You cannot lay God under obligation : recognise that great truth, because it involves our proper relation to him as always receivers and never donors of the benefit.

“Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” This is the first time I have heard you say “wrath ;” when you began to preach, you said, “the kingdom of Heaven.” How do you account for this change in your language and your tone? In reply to this inquiry John tells me that the Gospel of Christ is either a kingdom or a wrath. It is a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death. It is a gospel or a judgment, a heaven or a hell, an eye turned towards the zenith of God's heart, bright as a morning, or the same eye turned in kindling wrath towards the Egyptians, troubling the camp, and striking off the chariot-wheels though they be made of solid iron. This book cannot occupy a middle place in society. It is either *the* Book or no book, a gospel or a lie, a religion or a blasphemy. No man can entertain an opinion of indifference regarding Jesus Christ. If he has considered the subject at all, he must worship Christ or crucify Him. He cannot be allowed to live as an indifferent person, about whom any opinions may be formed you please. Where there is earnestness in the inquiry and the criticism, that earnestness ends in homage or in crucifixion.

This sermon by John the Baptist is not the kind of introduction one would have expected to the incoming of the Son of God. No gentle tone seems to escape the lips of this man : it is as if a stormy whirlwind had caught him and borne him on through the wilderness of Judea, and as if a great fire were behind him as he earnestly makes his way. Strange and terrible are these words—Repent, Prepare, Axe, Purge his floor, Burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. In all these there is not one tone of conciliation, one smile of amiability, one outflow of cordiality. Yet this man comes before the Prince of Peace. Nor does he allude in this report to the gentler aspects of the coming One. He is taken

up with the idea of power; hence he says, "He that cometh after me is mightier than I." The preacher in the wilderness deals with the idea of strength; strength as a terror to evil, as a terrible judicial power. A melodious hymn, such as peace would sing in a garden of flowers, might have been expected, trembling, quivering with hopeful joy; but instead, there is a roar as of a sudden storm, and a cry as of unexpected terror. This is not the introduction I looked for, yet it is like the way of God in the making of human history. He is always setting aside human expectations, and building his temples in unlikely places and with unlikely material. God uses the storm. The ages are not all made up of long radiant summer days: night, and storm, and battle, as well as day, and calm, and peace, are God's servants. This age requires voices that can be heard: the world's vast wilderness is open, and the man that is needed now and in every age is the man who, with throat of brass, inspired with iron lungs, can cry, "Repent." The church is now in danger of overfeeding the few and forgetting the hungry many. There is a work to be done in the wilderness; the manner appropriate to the wilderness may not be appropriate to the church: what is wanted, therefore, is adaptation, the loud cry or the subdued tone—both are wanted, and always will be wanted, to meet the world's great want.

Yet how incomplete it would be to say that this report of John's ministry given in the gospel by Matthew fully represents the work done by the energetic Baptist. Supposing we had no other account but the one which is now immediately before us, we should have no conception approaching completeness of the work which John did in his short day. It is so that all preachers suffer. Let us go and inquire of those who have heard John the Baptist preach, and listen what reports they give of this wonderful man. Have you heard this new preacher deliver a discourse—the man whose raiment is of camel's hair, with a leathern girdle about his loins? "Yes," is the reply, "we have heard him preach." What do you think of him? "He is a harsh man, his voice grates, he utters austere words." What did you hear him say? "We heard him call the Pharisees and the Sadducees a brood of vipers." He did not call the Pharisees and the Sadducees a brood of vipers to their faces, did he? "Yes." Then we do not care to hear so fierce a preacher.

Ask others. Have you heard John the Baptist preach? "Yes." What say you about him? "Savage, terrible; do not go near him, he will offend, he will affright you." Why? you say. Can you tell us anything you have heard him say? "Yes, we heard him say, The axe is laid unto the root of the tree: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire; and after that he said it was an unquenchable fire." Then he is not the kind of preacher that would suit us; we like the gentle and the quiet, the contemplative, the almost silent: above all things we love the pathetic and the soothing—so we shall not go to hear this Jordan-preacher.

But here are others coming from the sermon: have you heard him preach? "Yes." What said he? "He said there was One coming, whose fan was in his hand, and he would thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into the garner, but burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

All these three reports concur: they all represent John the Baptist as a fierce oburgatory preacher. His lips are iron-bound, his voice is like a shock of tempest, and there is no gentleness in his heart. By these fierce utterances he disproves his claim to be the herald of the man you expect.

There the report of this great preacher might end. Would you have a true conception of his marvellous power from the report which Matthew gives in this chapter? You must collate the other evangelists and put the story together, piece by piece, until you get its wholeness. This same John the Baptist said the tenderest thing that ever fell from human lips. The man who said, "Vipers—axe—fire—fan—" said the most touching words that ever fell on the bruised and expectant heart of men. I have noticed that to be the case so frequently—that the men who can denounce the age with so fierce an accent, can bless the age with its softest and sweetest benedictions. I have noticed that the humorist is the master of pathos. I have observed that the man who is most fierce against iniquity, can also be the most sympathetic with weakness and sorrow.

Now having heard the three reports about John, let us wait a few days and then inquire again. Let us suppose those few days to have elapsed, and here is a party coming from listening to the Baptist. Let us inquire—have you heard the Baptist preach?

"Yes." What think ye of him? "He hath broken our hearts." What, has he said anything about viper, and fire, and axe, and fan? "Nothing." What then did he say? He cannot have spoken any gentle thing: gentle things would not become that fierce mouth. What said he? Now listen to the reply, and tell me if this does not reveal the character of the Baptist in its roundness. He said, looking upon One who was within sight, and pointing to him, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." What, did the man who said, "Viper, axe, fire, fan, purge the floor"—did he say, "Behold the Lamb of God"? "Yes." Then he preached the only sermon worth preaching!

NOTES.

For a most elaborate and powerful discussion of the ministry of John the Baptist, see the work of Dr. HENRY REYNOLDS.

John the Baptist was about six months older than Jesus Christ.

"Born, according to Rabbinical tradition, at Hebron, but according to modern expositors, at Jutta, in the tribe of Judah."

Repent ye,—change your minds, "not *in order* that the kingdom of heaven may come, but *because* it cometh."

John was unwilling to baptise the Pharisees and Sadducees, and he was also unwilling to baptise the Messiah. Easily accounted for. The one *fell below*, the other infinitely *transcended* the standard.

In the East only *fruit* trees are valued. Others are looked upon as cumberers of the ground.

"When men were admitted as proselytes, three rites were performed—*circumcision*, *baptism*, and *oblation*; when *women*, two—*baptism* and *oblation*. The whole family of proselytes, including infants, were baptized."—*Alford*.

It was supposed that no one who had been circumcised was cast into Gehenna.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, since the darkness and the light are both alike unto thee, thou canst make it light in our hearts, even though they be under a great cloud and gloom. Thou delightest to come into the soul of man, and to shed upon it all the brightness and beauty of heavenly morning. So do thou now come unto our hearts and create all the peace of thy sacred Sabbath, and give thy pilgrims rest. Very good art thou, and as for thy truth, it is more sure than the sun. Very tender, beyond all we know of pity, is the Lord, and he is our Father, and on him do we rest in the time of sore trouble and great fear. For a long time we turned our eyes away from thee as though we knew thee not, and then suddenly coming upon great woe, behold our hearts turned their eyes towards the heavens to search for him who reigns and rules over all. Thou dost receive thy prodigals every day, yea, in the night time dost thou open the door of thy house to let thy wanderers in. We are all thine, though we have spoken against thee : we bear thine image, though our hand has been thrust into thy face : we are still thy children, though we have ruined every faculty and wasted our inheritance, and are no more worthy to be called thy sons. So great is thy love, so all-forgiving is thy spirit : we come to thee now without any defence or excuse, assured by the very breath of thy gospel that we shall be received even with joyfulness, in the courts of our Father's house.

We have done wickedly : we bring back no commandment to thy throne that we have kept : we dare not stand upon our virtue and innocence and ask for thine inquiry. We are evil, and we have done evil, and we are witnesses against ourselves, and the day is too short to hear the testimony of our self-accusation. But great is the mercy of the Lord, and full is his everlasting love and ready to reply in his yielding and clement heart, seeing that we do come in the appointed way, and breathe our penitential prayer at the foot of the cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We speak in his sweet great name, it is a name to sinners dear, it was created for the use of sinners—verily it is their name, a rock in which they hide, a sun from which they expect their light, a sanctuary of delight and a pledge of power.

We entreat thee to hear our praises when we bless thee for all thy loving care. The fire has not gone out at home, the sick one is still with us, and a new gleam of hope lights up the chamber of gloom. Thou hast kept our roof over our head, and the snow has melted without drenching us. Behold thou hast kept the winter outside, and on the hearthstone hast thou set the flower of summer. Our table thou dost spread with a liberal hand, thou dost make our bed, and soften our pillow, and send sweet sleep to give us renewal of strength. All our friends are with us still, cheerful and glad, and touching us

with the contagion of a rich sympathy, blessing us with the comfort of high fellowship, and giving gladness to the earth. Our reasoning faculties thou hast spared unto us, we are men at liberty and not in prison, we are bound to one another by the bonds of love, no fetter falls upon our limbs. What, then, shall we render unto the Lord for all his personal and social blessings unto us? We will lift high our hymn of praise, and bless the Lord with a solemn psalm.

Beyond all this, thou hast made our hearts rich with grace : before our eyes thou hast set a bright hope, thou hast put into our souls the comfort of thy Son, thou hast given us a Saviour, name high above all others, sweet beyond all names we know. May he be unto us Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, all and in all, what we need, what we cannot live without, assurance upon assurance, as grace upon grace, until our confidence becomes a high triumph.

We bless thee for thy written Word, placed before us in our mother tongue : we thank thee for ability to read it, each man for himself. As we read, do thou explain : then shall thy word be written upon the page before us, and upon the inner page of our loving hearts.

Hear all special praises and incline thine ear to all particular complaints. Do thou give rest unto the weary, and hope to the sad, and a new beginning to those who have spoiled all the past. Lift us into high ecstasy because of the renewal of our life and hope in Christ Jesus, and as the year closes around us, and bids us pensively Farewell, may we rise in the spirit of devotion and consecration, and attach ourselves to thy cause by broad and honourable vows.

Good Lord, hear us : let thy pity be greater than our sin, let the cross of Jesus Christ rise infinitely beyond the gloom of our distress, and give us assurance of pardon, purity, and heaven. Amen.

Matthew iii. 13-17.

13. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

14. But John forbad (sought to hinder) him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

15. And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now (for the present), for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

16. And Jesus when he was baptized went straightway out of the water, and to the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him :

17. And lo a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST.

THERE is one point upon which we are all agreed—namely, that the baptism of Jesus Christ could not be a baptism unto *repentance*. “He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” He was without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, the very Son of God, pure as the bosom on which he rested and out

of which he came. We must, therefore, find other reasons than that of repentance for this baptism of the Saviour of the world. John must enlarge his own conception of the baptism which he came to administer. He had used the word Repent; now a new word was to be attached to his baptism, and an infinitely older and larger word. What man amongst us is there who knows the exact measure of his work? Yet, for the sake of convenience, every one of us has a name by which he designates his ministry. John, for example, called his service a baptism unto repentance. But there came One unto him who said, "The other word which enlarges your service to its true proportion, and indicates its high intent and purport, is—Righteousness." John thought his ministry a negative one: Jesus Christ taught him that his baptism was positive as well as negative, a baptism unto righteousness or in accordance with the spirit of righteousness, as well as a baptism unto repentance.

This baptism of Christ was a baptism of *sympathy*. Sympathy means feeling with, having a common pathos or feeling, emotion, or passion, and he, the Saviour, was in all points made like unto his brethren, that in all points he might have a fellow-feeling, a kindred passion; that there might be no tone in all the gamut of their life's utterance to which he could not respond, giving it a counterpart, a fulfilment, a higher emphasis, a keener and truer accent. Jesus Christ identified himself with all the dispensations of providence; he was the spirit of the prophets, and now he came into this baptism of John. When he expounded the Scriptures he began at Moses—he could not have begun earlier—and he expounded them to those who listened to him—what was written in Moses, in the prophets, and in the Psalms, and having been present in all these dispensations or varieties of the divine mood in relation to the children of men, was he to be absent only from the baptism of John? So he accepted that baptism, not because the word Repentance was associated with it, but because it also extended itself by subtle processes wholly unknown to the Baptist himself to—*Righteousness*.

It was a baptism of *inauguration* and a baptism of *approval*; John was hereby sealed as a witness and messenger of God. By this act Jesus Christ said, "John is no adventurer, and his baptism is no mere sensation of the passing hour. It goes back to the

decree and purpose of God, it looks forward to the infinite gospel which it holds," and thus John himself was sealed, approved, and crowned in this very act of humble service performed by the Son of God. It was, I repeat, a baptism of inauguration. Jesus Christ was not in the sacerdotal line, though in the line royal: he came to be the Priest of the universe, having from eternity been its King, now he was introduced or inaugurated into his high priestly office.

How little we know what we are doing when we baptize any life. We speak of repentance and cleansing as the meaning and purport of baptism, and sometimes we are baptizing kings and priests and we know it not. The possibility that we may be thus inaugurating to high office and a noble position some human life should throw over our whole service a tender and hopeful solemnity. You cannot tell who is under your influence: it may be a king, a priest, a deliverer. You thought your work was a preliminary one, you called yourself an elementary teacher, you said, in humble self-deprecation, "I am but a pioneer, I am only a forerunner, my name is a herald and nothing more, and I give introductory lessons, and cannot proceed to the higher learning: I am only a precursor, and nothing more." You limited yourself too much. John thought he was a crying voice, whereas it was appointed of God that he should inaugurate to his priestly office the Saviour of the world.

Thus the lesser may be concerned in the service of the greater. "I have need to be baptized of thee." If a man does not feel his own need of baptism, he is unworthy of administering the rite in any of its higher senses to the humblest creature that ever was presented at the altar. "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" We know the meaning of this in other ranges of thinking. A minister sometimes sees before him persons to whom intellectually he is but slave and minister, and he says, "I have need to be intellectually elevated and illuminated by thee, and comest thou to me?" Yet the coming is perfectly right, for this kingdom of Christ is not a merely intellectual school, it is a school in which intellect has to sit down and humble itself, and patiently wait for the illumining revelation which is shed from Heaven. We do not sit here in our cleverness and grandeur and intellectual influence, but in our moral nakedness and necessity,

in our spiritual simplicity and childlikeness, waiting not for man but for God, and for man only in so far as he is the medium on which the infinite silence breaks into momentary speech for the teaching and comforting of the human heart.

Thus, too, God puts himself under his own laws. "The laws of nature" is a mood of God, is but another expression for God himself. Do not speak of laws of nature as if they were somewhat independent of God. They are God, they are God in motion, God made visible, God made audible, God coming down in wondrous condescension so far into our region, and thinking that we can in some degree trace him, and identify him, and judge him. Thus Jesus Christ came unto the baptism of John. It was to him a baptism of sympathy, a baptism of approval, a baptism of inauguration, a stooping of the divine so as to take up its own laws and exemplify its own purposes.

REVIEW OF THE CHAPTER.

Now, looking at the third chapter as a whole, having already gone through it in detail, we seem to see in this brief chapter *the history of a whole dispensation*, the dispensation of John the Baptist. It begins and ends in these seventeen short verses. In this chapter I read, "Then cometh JOHN," and I also read, "Then cometh JESUS. God thus condenses much into brief space. Sometimes he takes a long line, and we say he has gone into a far country, and we know not when he will return. Sometimes he seems to work with urgency and suddenness, and in a moment to begin and complete a whole dispensation. He is not to be measured by our lines, or described by our terms: we cannot tell what he will do—he may take ages countless in which to build a rock, he may take a short night-time in which to begin and complete a whole dispensation of his providence. Thus he baffles all our statistical tables. We have no calculus by which we can tell when he will come, or where he will be at a given period; we cannot take him within our sweep and line. He loves to baffle the ingenuity of man. We have reduced everything now to a law of averages, but God stands out of our reckoning, and no man can say whether he will not come to-night to judge the world. Thus are we kept in continual expectation, thus there is ever near us a

ghost that alarms or comforts, according to the mood of our heart. Let us learn that our business is to rest in the Lord and to wait patiently for him, so that whether he come to-night or do not come for long ages yet to elapse, we may be found doing our little best, cultivating our tiny corner, watching, waiting, praying, hoping, suffering with a hero's confidence, toiling with a son's delight, and then, come when he may, it will be summer for our souls, release and freedom from all that makes us mean.

Looking again at this chapter as a whole, we see that it introduces a new name into human history. May I pause a moment to ask you what that new name is? As we have read the chapter over several times together, did you hear one name that struck you as music strikes an attentive soul? It is a short name, it is—SON. "This is my beloved Son." We have made ourselves so familiar with that word, that we read it as though it did not mark a new epoch in human history; but if we could have read the Bible through at one long sitting, we should have seen that the line of development moves in this form, *Man—Servant—PROPHET—MESSENGER—SON*. Last of all he sent his Son also. It is infinitely exciting to see how these new words came into human speech. All the time we felt something was wanting: *Man* was a great name, *Servant* a high office, *Prophet* a marvellous function, *Messenger* a high ministry—SON takes them up and rounds them into completeness, and lights them with ineffable splendour.

The divine movement is always climacteric, the divine progress is an *ascension*. God does not begin with Son and work down to servant, nor with man and work down to some insignificant molecule: he begins at the other end, and always the better day is to come. Prophecy meant that the day of light was to dawn upon the hills and valleys of time, and that music was to take the place of groaning. That is the thread or line of the Bible, and because it is so I find in that very movement of ascension a confirmatory illustration, not to say an original and complete argument, on behalf of the divinity and authority of the Book which we worship as divinely inspired and final in its moral revelations.

Then, looking again at the chapter as a whole, we see that it completes what other dispensations only began. The proofs upon this point are several and brilliant. What is the first word we hear in connection with human history, or with the formation of

man? It is *make*. "Let us make man." In connection with Jesus Christ, "This is my only BEGOTTEN Son." A Creator, a Father, an Artist, a God. Still the line heightens itself in the same direction. What is the description of the character of man in the first instance? *Upright*. God made man upright. What is the word used in connection with the Son? *Beloved*. See how God rises, and how his revelation brightens broadly. Upright—an experiment in moral mechanics : upright—an attitude : upright—negative. Beloved—kindred, sympathetic, approved, complete. It is thus that the Bible grows from root to flower ; this is development. We claim that word as a Christian term, we cannot do without it in the church ; the whole scheme of the divine administration of human affairs is a development, a progress, an upward marching : see it in the blade, the ear, the full corn in the ear : we would have God's Book judged by that law or science of development, and so judged we are brought from Make to Begotten, from Upright to Beloved, and from Very Good to Well Pleased. Hear ye not the same old, rich voice? "God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good." "Lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In both cases he sets himself in a relation of satisfaction to what is before him. Man, standing there, fashioned in his own image, upright, faultless, inexperienced, with a great destiny to work out—on him is written "Very good." The last outcome of this human growth and mystery stands before him on Jordan's banks, and a voice says, "Well pleased," and when God is pleased law is satisfied and grace is triumphant.

Then we come further still, from the *Us* of the creating Trinity to the *My* of the approving Father. Thus, in the creation of man we read, "Let *us* make man." In the inauguration of the Son we read, "This is *my* beloved Son." Examine still further, and in other fields and relationships, this suggestion of the continuous, ever-culminating development of the divine purpose, and say if there be not in it a rich fund of spiritual instruction and satisfaction. There has been a divine ideal in the rest towards which God has been slowly moving, through revolution, and war, and distress, and manifold experiences of every human kind, but never did he say "Well pleased" until there stood

before him his only begotten Son. Five hundred years before he was not at rest. A century before, his purpose was still a hundred years a-head, but steadily, surely, grandly he moved on, the line now dipping into deep pits, now starting up high hills—still on he moved. You cannot turn God back, though now the ancestral line is lost in a harlot, and now it is put to risk in a wayward king. Still he moves on, and presently he says, "It is finished : this is my beloved SON."

So shall it be in the culmination and upgathering of all things. Jesus Christ must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, and when death lies below his feet, he will deliver up the kingdom to God and his Father, and God shall be all in all. Haste thee, calm morning, a flame with every colour of beauty, peaceful with the divine benediction—O, come. The old earth is torn with pain and distressed with intolerable pangs—but that morning cometh. Watchman, what of the night? The night cometh, and also the morning. We are in sad case just now. England was never baser in her morals in many public aspects of her history than she is at this moment. She never more foully debased her journalism, or poured out of her history streams more revolting and pestilential. But God is moving on ; it is his old movement ; he knows every knot in the line, every twist in the road, every difficulty in the path—but if you could see his eye, it never moves from the point he has set before him, and he will bring in all his purposes and decrees, his completed oaths and covenants fulfilled, for his own mouth hath spoken it.

Are we now to bid farewell to John the Baptist? Are you still in John's baptism? He was a burning and a shining light, but you ought to have left him long ago. Are you still down by Jordan's banks, wanting to take the plunge? Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not appeared a greater than John the Baptist ; nevertheless, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. You ought, therefore, to take the step from the initial baptism into the inner and Christian one. You ought to leave the letter and pass into the spirit. You ought now to be able to enjoy the large, calm, sweet liberty of the gospel, and not be bound by ordinances, and observances, and divers ceremonies. We have left these behind us : they were

useful in their time, they were elements which God used for the further broadening and illumination of his righteousness, so far as our vision was concerned, but now I know nothing of any ceremony: I have outlived it; if I do anything, it is merely to remind me, merely as a suggestion; not as a necessity, but as a help to some higher spiritual blessing.

Do you say you have been baptized, and therefore you are all right? All the water in all the seas and firmaments of heaven could not cleanse you. Do you say you sit down regularly to the Lord's supper? All the wine in all the vineyards of creation would not contain one drop of blood to you, if you are not already hidden in the very heart of the Son of God. Do you say you regularly come to church and observe religious fasts and festivals? Away with all these externals, if they do not indicate contrition, self-renunciation, trust in a living Christ, identification with the Son of God. We are not saved by the outward, but by the inward. All the outward is but symbolical—the inward baptism is a shedding abroad in the heart of the Holy Ghost.

The Lord's peace be in our souls, and the Lord help us to see beyond the letter into all the brightness and beauty of the spirit.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we know that thy Word is true, because it is written in our own life, and syllable by syllable we live it out every day. There is in the heart of man an answer to the appeal of thy Book : we know what is meant when we come upon the words sin, temptation, pain, and fear ; we bless thee that we also know the meaning of the words love, grace, pardon—these are thy heart-words, they come with all the yearning of thy spirit, and they cry unto us and make known unto our souls the gospel of thy pity. We bless thee that we have light upon one side of our life, for we do not deserve it : our sin might have surrounded us with infinite night, and left no room for light on all the way that we take. But where sin abounds grace doth much more abound : thou dost answer death by life : where the devil is strong thou art stronger : more are they that be for us than they that be against us. Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ ? There is no arm so strong as thine, there is no wisdom so full of light as is the omniscience of God. As for thy grace, it is deeper than the sea, and thy love is higher than the sun. Thus doth rest come into our hearts and peace alight upon our spirits as a dove from Heaven. Enable us amid all sin and sorrow of every kind to fix our eyes upon the uplifted cross and upon the Son of God, then shall the light thereof break upon us like a morning long delayed, and in our souls there shall be all the comfort of thy peace.

We are here, not to keep silence before thee, but to speak of thy goodness and thy mercy, long continued and never failing. Thy rod and thy staff have comforted us, and thou hast enlarged thy house so that we have found it everywhere, in business, in affliction, in service, in waiting. We would dwell in the house of the Lord for ever and ever, and in his temple would we build our nest, yea, by thine altars would we be found at last, so that death shall be but an entrance into Heaven.

We implore thee to take care of us during our remaining days. Hold thou us up and we shall be safe : forsake us not for one instant, for the serpent is vigilant, and the enemy is mighty. Give us the right answer to every temptation, give us the right view of every trial, help us so to number our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom, give us that holy trust in thy name and grace which no power can shake. May our hearts wait upon God steadfastly, with all the constancy of inviolable love, may we look unto God from whom is all our expectation.

Thou hast shot sore at some of us ; yea, our hearts are full of thine arrows which are drinking our blood. Thou hast darkened the sunniest room in the house. Thou hast taken away our chosen good, thou hast turned upside down

our supreme earthly delight, thou hast made havoc in the garden and the place of flowers hath become a wild wilderness. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Thou hast dug the grave in the midst of our home, and instead of the turtle, thou hast sent the mocking-bird to taunt us with strange tones. To some of us thou hast given of the very wine of Heaven, yea the sun hath smiled upon our roof, our basket, and our store thou hast blessed, our flocks and herds are a multitude, and our ground brings forth abundantly. The rivers are full of fish and the air dark with birds, and behold our house is set upon a rock, and the south wind breathes through every chamber. The Lord sanctify prosperity unto the prosperous, as well as adversity unto those who sit in trouble. Show us that there is danger on the mountain top as well as in the deep valley.

Thou hast granted unto our children health and strength and beauty, and thou hast filled their mouth with laughter, and their mind with sunny hope and dream. In their tongue is found music and in their feet readiness to obey. The Lord spare their lives, the Lord make them better than their ancestors, the Lord baptize them from the heavens with his benediction day by day till old age shall come.

Look upon us, one and all—upon the old man, weary, hardly knowing why; upon the little child, glad with a laughter that is never to perish; upon the busy man with bent back, raking in the dust for that which is of no worth; upon the man of leisure whose idleness is a trial, upon the silent, broken-hearted mother, who cries over her prodigal child and dare not name his name; upon those who have little bread and fear to touch it lest it waste; upon the great man in the fulness of his breadth and power—yea, upon us all, overlooking none, do thou command thine all-enriching blessing, that, according to our years, our weakness, our necessity, and our joy, we may receive of the Lord's hand.

Help us to forgive our enemies: give us a memory that quickly forgets all injuries and a recollection that clings, with all the tenacity of love, to every deed of kindness and speech of gratitude. The Lord anoint us afresh to his work, the Lord pity our littlenesses and reckon them not as sins against us, the Lord have mercy upon us according to the fulness of his own grace and the infinite work of our one and only Priest and Saviour. Drive back the enemy, break his teeth, disappoint his expectation, and cover him with shame.

Bless our friends who would sympathise with us and cheer us and speak the word of Heaven to us in earthly imprisonment and darkness, and the Lord be with us till the little tale of our life be all told, and **make** us ready for the green churchyard and for the greener heaven. Amen.

Matthew iv. 1-11.

1. Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

2. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.

3. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

4. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

5. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple.

6. And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down ; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee : and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

7. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

8. Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them ;

9. And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

10. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan ; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve.

11. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

THE TEMPTATION.

"**T**HEN." That word indicates a point of time. It will be interesting to fix that point with some definiteness. We like to know under what circumstances great events transpire. Sometimes we want to know not only the fact, but the atmosphere which surrounded it. You do not see any event in its proper altitude, relationship and colour, until you take in the circumstances leading up to it or surrounding it. When therefore I read, "*Then* was Jesus led up," my mind anxiously inquires, When? Herod wanted to know what time the star appeared ; what wonder if we want to know what time the devil appeared ? To find the answer to this inquiry you must go back to the chapter whose exposition we have just completed. "Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him : and lo, a voice saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. *Then* was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." Such are the violent alternations of human experience, baptized and tempted, approved of God and handed over to the devil, standing with a grand inaugural sign upon our heads on the river's bank and then driven as with whips and scourges into the wilderness to fight life's determining battle.

Do not question the validity of your baptism because it was

succeeded by a fierce temptation. Do not say you must have been mistaken when you thought the dove descended from heaven and alighted upon you, otherwise you could never have been subjected to this succession of thunder-storms. Read the life of your Lord and Master, and find from that life that our relationships to God seem, in their outward aspects, to change suddenly and even vitally. You are a son of God, standing on the bank of the river, and you are just as much a son of God when tormented and vexed by all the forces of hell in the wilderness. Sonship does not depend upon moods and feelings. You are a child of God, whatever may be your momentary relationship, either to Heaven, earth, or hell. God is not variable, his elections are not so many opportunities of recalling his decrees. Be sure of your adoption into the family of God, and then leave yourselves to be operated upon by all the discipline which is of heavenly appointment, for it works only to the maturing and the cleansing of your soul, and the ripening and sanctification of your redeemed powers. Jesus Christ was a Son when the dove alighted upon him, and he was a Son when the devil set his whole force of genius and subtlety to bear upon the citadel of his faith.

Cheer thee, then, despondent soul, for God can make the wilderness blossom as the rose.

"Then was Jesus led up." We speak sometimes of temptation as if it were an accident of life: we forget the words "led up." These words indicate that temptation is part of a *plan*, it is a step in the succession to a better life. Sometimes we delude ourselves with the foolish imagination that if we step very softly, we shall get past the serpent's nest without the serpent hearing us, we shall elude the devil, we shall play a trick upon him, and when we are miles off we will laugh at him as an enemy that overslept himself, whose leaden ears were sealed in sleep, so that he did not hear us when we passed him in velvet slippers. Take no such mean and unworthy view of life. Life itself is temptation. To *be*, is to be nearly lost. To be here at all is to be in the devil's hands, in senses which will appear as the exposition advances.

Understand that you *have* to be tempted. The wilderness is not a sphere lying a thousand miles from your course, into which you may go if you are disposed to undertake perilous adventure. Your eye is fixed on Heaven, and right across, from sea to sea,

lies the wilderness, and you cannot escape it. I do not speak of wildernesses and temptations and devils as if they were parts of a universe over which God had but imperfect control. The Lord sitteth upon the circle of the earth and upon the very height of Heaven, and the devil is his slave, chained with iron and with bits in his cruel mouth, and beyond his chain he cannot go. Do not speak with bated breath about this matter of temptation, as if it were possible to sneak into Heaven. I must be assailed, tried, tormented, vexed, thrown down, battered, stamped on, and if I have not passed through experiences of this kind, the whole priesthood of Christ has been lost upon me, and if there be no experiences of this kind to pass through, then the cross of Christ is an exaggeration of remedial measures, and there was no need for the heart of the Son of God to burst in pity or in sacrifice. Count it no strange thing when temptations befall you; to be finite is to be tempted; to be a fraction instead of a whole number is to have in you the unrest of incompleteness, and the strange restless spirit that says, "Try to complete yourself, for the fraction may become an integer."

From this point of view, then, temptation is part of the divine scheme. The devil is under the control of God. Why there should have been a devil, I cannot tell; I only know that we owe the shadow to the light, and I further console myself in moments of impious intellectual ambition with the thought that I am of yesterday and know nothing, and that there is a time coming for deeper study, and further and completer investigation. These mysteries are not to be solved here and now; I accept them as mysteries, and I accept them with the less hesitation because they tally with my inmost consciousness, with experiences known to the human heart, altogether apart from religious convictions of this or that particular theological kind.

"Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil," and when the tempter came to him, he said three things. The tempter has only *three* things to say; the tempter's programme is short and shallow; beyond those three things he has never advanced one step. He is not a genius of infinite resource; he is not an assailant that may surprise us with dazzling originalities—his temptations are stale, I can weigh them in scales and assign their weight; I can measure them and tell

you their circumference, I know where they begin, and how they operate, and how they close. He, the devil, is not the subtle and ever-fertile genius which we have vainly imagined him to be. He has three great clubs with which he endeavours to smite you; I can give you their names, their size, and their whole capability.

Hear what the devil said. "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." This was an appeal to immediate necessity. The devil comes in a spirit of benevolence; he shrinks into as little devil as possible and says, "You are hungry; if I could make bread for you I would, but I am only devil, blamed one, bearing the stigma of the universe; if I could have brought you bread all this distance I would have done so, but if you are the Son of God, you must have power to work miracles—turn these stones into bread." The devil addresses himself to the appetite of the moment, or the supreme impulse of the passing time. Whatever you want most, he is willing to supply—at what expense will presently appear.

Observe his benevolence, and observe how *harmless* was the temptation. It was hardly a temptation at all. What harm could there be in making bread in a moment of hunger? The suggestion was marked by the most obvious pertinence and excellent good sense. After forty days and forty nights of abstinence, you must be suffering pangs which none can fully understand; therefore make bread for yourself, and satisfy the importunate and lawful appetite which now maddens you. You know that temptation—you know the voice which softens itself into a tender wheedling and says to you, "There can be at least no harm in this." And there may be no harm in certain words, in themselves considered, but there may be great harm in accepting the suggestion of the devil. If it were possible for him to preach a gospel to us, there might be infinite risk in accepting it at his lips, for they are pledged with a thousand oaths to do another kind of work, and if he have stolen into this service, he has a purpose in it approved of his own soul, and therefore which should excite in us suspicion and alarm.

"If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee." He comes now to develop our faith; he appears with the sacred mission of

endeavouring to show us how to become actually more religious than ever. Was there ever such a devil ! He shows us how we may be more pious than we ever hoped or expected to be, by entering into daring engagements as pious and all-trusting acrobats. His motto is—Presume upon God, test his strength, bring him the opportunity of showing what he means by his promises. In levelling this temptation at the heart, he takes care to surround himself by circumstances which might substantially aid his malign purpose. He took Christ to the holy city and set him on a pinnacle of the Temple—surrounded him by *external* religion in order to persuade him to dethrone an *interior* loyalty to God. As if the devil had said, “This is the holy city ; within its confines God will permit no lapse of his promise to take place. This is the Temple, and a pinnacle of it, and in connection with his own chosen sanctuary, he will allow no spiritual tragedy to take place. Do not suppose I should tempt you to anything evil in this holy city, and whilst we are standing on the topmost point of the most sacred house under the sun !”

This was an appeal to the Son of God to be presumptuous, to force meanings into the divine word which the divine Spirit never intended to convey, to force God into situations which he never intended to be occupied. Do you know the subtlety and force of such suggestions ? Do you know what it is for men to get themselves almost purposely into trouble, that they may put the divine word to its fullest stress ? Do you know what it is to shut the eyes, to lower the head and to run straight against a granite rock, and then to blame God for not softening it into a cloud through which you could thrust your head with ease ? Let those answer the pungent inquiries who are best acquainted with their soul's own history.

The third thing the enemy said, and this ends his programme, was, “All these things—namely, all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them—will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” It was the temptation of bribery ; it was the temptation addressed to every instinct which is in every human heart to turn much into more ; it was a short and easy method of becoming rich—the direct cut to rulership ; it was the simplification of all the intricacies and complexities and difficulties of ordinary life. It was a blade that cut the knot, and made the way short and simple.

Beyond these three things the devil has never got. I pause now to look at them, with a view of finding in the temptations *the true character of the tempter*. If we are to know a tree by its fruits, so we may know a tempter by his temptations. In very deed the devil has said nothing bad here, taking the mere letter in its littleness. "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, and put God to the test. All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Given such evidence, to find out by fair induction what the devil is.

Let us now study the temptations in the light of that inquiry. Let us look at both sides of the wedge. Given the thin end of the wedge, to find out the thick end. That can be easily done with these paragraphs before us, thus. As he would have turned stones into bread, *so he would turn bread into stones*; and that is what he means to do. He begins innocently, benevolently: "Turn these stones into bread;" and having obeyed him in that particular, he makes a precedent of that obedience, and by-and-by he will say, "Now turn this bread into stones." That is what he wants to do with every one of us—wants us to turn our virtues into vices, wants us to turn our prayers into presumptions, wants us to turn our religion into profanity and blasphemy. No worth of character deters him; he would take your dear little child and make an imp of his own of that beautiful soul; he would take all the bread of heaven and make a stone of it; he would diabolize the very Deity himself. That is the thick end of the wedge. He believes in processes of transformation; but his is a transformation that operates in both ways—namely, turning stones into bread and turning bread into stones. Beautiful soul, with thy high dreams and sacred purposes and noble impulses, the devil would turn all these high excitements and forces of thine into ministries which would serve his own kingdom.

Then with regard to the next temptation. As he would have risked a life on the pretence of trusting God, *so he would risk God on the pretence of saving life*. That is the thick end of the wedge. He is always tempting God to do from his point what he tempted Christ to do from a lower point. He tempted Christ to risk his life to put God's word to the test, he tempts God to save life that he may lose himself. Thus the devil is continually blaming God

for the inequalities of human life. He is perpetually sending challenges to heaven, saying, "If thou art almighty, why permit these social monstrosities, rebellions, poverties, wars? If thou art almighty, why not by a fiat put an end to the lake of fire and the whole region of devildom, and reign over a universe uncut by a single grave,—unblasted by a single sin?"

This is precisely the temptation which was levelled against the constancy of Christ. Said he to Christ, "Risk yourself to save a life." The infidel has no weapon that he deems longer, stronger, and sharper than this challenge to God to prove his almightiness by deposing and destroying the devil. If the whole question were to be determined within four-and-twenty hours, if God's eternity were an affair of one round of the clock, there might be some little force in this temptation, and blasphemy. But God operates by a long circuit; we cannot tell what he is doing in the secret places of the universe; we hear but a very little of his voice, the full thunder of it would break the listening ear. I am creature, not Creator, child of a day, not the Inhabitant of eternity, so I would quietly and lovingly wait till God's processes are brought to their culmination.

Look at the third temptation. As the devil offered kingdoms in return for worship, he knows whoever receives the *worship* actually holds the *kingdoms*! This is the subtlest of all the temptations. Give a sentiment for property; bow the knee for a crown; fall down before me and say, "Thou art my God," and I will give thee kingdoms and dominions, vast and innumerable. Who would hesitate to pay down a sentiment for a nation, who would hesitate to change a god, if by a theological transmutation an empire could be purchased? We are cautioned to beware of sentiment; we are told certain objections are sentimental, we are put on our guard against emotion. Religion has been watered down into a sentiment, and I protest against the infamous dilution. Religion is a conviction, an obligation, a constraint of the soul, an allegiance of the faculties which make me man. It is not an evaporating tear, it is not a transient, dying sigh, it is my life, translated into its highest speech.

Observe how the benevolence of the devil is shown at last to be utter selfishness. "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." To worship is to give; whom I

worship I serve. If I worship God and keep anything back from him, my worship is blasphemy. If I love the cross and hold anything back from its outstretched arms, I am a mocker and no saint. We seek not yours, but you—having *you* we have *yours*! We only give where we love. The benevolence of the devil is a fraud, the generosity of the devil is a lie. My young friend, the devil never gives anything good that he promises, you fall down and worship him, and then call upon him for the kingdoms and he will not give them. Show him the writing, recall the oath, and he will mock thee, and with leering eye, look, and with a mocking taunting voice, say, “I am not i’ th’ vein.” I challenge any man in the world to show me that he ever got anything good at the hands of the devil.

The three temptations, then, are now before us, and the character of the devil, as suggested by these temptations, is also before us in rough outline. The devil has no other temptations. He appeals to your dominant appetite, he asks you to make God your servant, always to be at your beck and bidding, to give you a good harvest, and a fine income, and plenty to eat and drink and abundance of possessions. He says, “Trust him to that extent, force him to the keeping of his word, and ask him, if the harvest is bad, what he means by sending you a bad harvest when you were praying for a good one. Tax him to his face with his promises, and compel him to keep them.” And then, last of all, he says, “Give up everything for the world, give up your prayers and your hymn-singing, and all your religion, for more mud, and more mud, and more mud—have all the mud and have it for next to nothing, for an inclination of the head, for a bending of the knee, for one loyal remark.” No other temptation has Satan to level at your hearts. He may vary the form, he may change the manner and expression, but centrally and substantially his programme is written in this text, and every man can prove it for himself, and know the measure and the force of every syllable of it.

Thus the devil delivers a threefold knock on the door of the heart. What answers Christ will make when he opens the door we shall see in our next exposition.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou knowest why we are in haste, for our days are but a handful, and our breath is dying in our nostrils. Few and evil have been the days of thy servants, yet hast thou given unto us great mercy and gladness, though we have often turned aside from thy gifts and have not enjoyed the bounty of thy love. Behold our years are hastening away ; no man hath hand long enough and strong enough to catch and detain them : they fly away on broad, swift wings, and we cannot tell which way they go, nor can any man find his dead yesterdays. O that men were wise, that they would consider these things, and lend an attentive mind to all thy Word, so that their lives might be founded in wisdom, and rise up in all the brightness of hope. Yet we are foolish before God, and obstinate : with a strange hardness of heart we receive his rain as the barren rock receives it, and return nothing that is beautiful and useful to him. God be merciful unto us sinners, and remember not the past against us as an accusation ; give us the inspiration of the Holy Ghost which will lead us to better life, that we may treasure our moments with most miserly care and spend them as men who must give an account of the outlay. Then shall our lives be filled with the beauty of a loving service, and in our very breath there shall be the expectation of a great hope.

We bless thee that we are still in the land of the living, that though the days yet to come may be few and dark, yet we shall spend them here, where the altar is, where the open Bible may be read, where the great cross of Christ rises above all our sin, and where even yet we may know the joy and the liberty of divine salvation

We bless thee for the year that is now dying, so full of mercy, though full of trouble. Thou hast watched us and tended us night and day, and though our life has been a daily peril and a nightly trouble, yet through all hast thou shown thy presence and given proof of thy government and dominion. The Lord overrule all things to happy ends, the Lord pardon his servants through Jesus Christ, the Priest and Saviour of the world, for every sin that has marred their lives ; the Lord accept any sacrifice we have rendered, not as gifts of our own, but as expressions of his inspiration.

We bless thee for all thy tender care and thy loving mercy ; and as for thy rod, so long and sharp and heavy, we would endeavour to kiss it, and bless the hand that has dealt the stroke. Wherein thou hast taken away from our eyes the beauty which filled them, hast thou not transplanted the flower to fairer climes ? Wherein thou hast dug the grave where we least of all would have it dug, is it not that thou mightest wean our love to things worthy of its fire ? Help us to see the divine meaning of our life, and to hide ourselves within the

ample purpose of God's love and wisdom ; may we keep our lives from sin, and our hearts from that aching despair which leaves an open gate for the devil and his angels. May we at all times rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him, knowing that we must not tempt him to our rescue, nor bring about our own purpose by deceitful means.

The Lord give cheerfulness of heart to those who have known long sorrow ; the Lord show one small rift in the dark cloud, through which the morning may be seen—yea, the Lord be tender with his own comfortableness to those who have been long strangers to aught of joy and high delight.

Enable us all to make better vows and to keep them. Permit us all to see the New Year with a higher courage and a nobler faith in God and in his Son. May our motto be—"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," and upon the banner of our life may there be written, "For me to live is Christ." And grant unto us thy Holy Spirit, an indwelling guest and friend, to inspire the right thought, to dictate the right word, to show us the right course in life. When the last day comes, and the last word is spoken, and the farewell is bidden to a world, by our sin not worth living in, may we have given us an entrance into the city of gardens, the city of light, the mother Jerusalem, the tender one, in whose breast we shall be nursed and nourished for ever. Amen.

Matthew iv. 1-11 (*continued*).

REFERRING to the remark, that all things were under the control of an independent and Self-existent being, even the devil himself being included in all things, the question has been asked whether, considering there is one Self-existent being, there might not be a possibility of there being two. I think if we look a little attentively into the matter, we shall find that there is only one representative or original of everything. We shall find that there is only one word in human speech : all other words come out of that as the branches and the leaves come out of the root. There is only one verb in all grammar : for the sake of convenience we have, perhaps, a thousand verbs, regular and irregular, but looked at closely we shall find that there is only one verb in all human speech : that is the verb *to be*. All the other verbs come out of it ; no other verb can live without it—all the other verbs are phases and moods and aspects of that—"I am that I am." We shall find that there is only one number, and that number is *One*. Two is an invention of yours. The multiplication table is a trick of man's ; there is only the number one. Two is a guess, a conjecture, something that has to be granted in order that other reckoning may be made, but all these numbers will run round again and come back to—One. There is only one light ; our

sun is lighted by some other flame. There is an inner and essential Shekinah in the universe at which all the meaner torches are lighted; planets and constellations catch their tiny blaze from that central and infinite lustre. There is but one life, God, and the devil is part of him. So is man, so is every angel. Mystery of mysteries—there is but one mystery in the universe, and that is not how the devil came to be, but how God came to be.

Having looked at the temptations one by one, let us now take the same course with regard to the *answers*. The first answer is, "Man shall not live by bread alone." This is a profound view of life as contrasted with a shallow one. The devil's notion was that life could be sustained only in one way; his short programme was, "Eat and live. Take plenty of bread and refuse to die." That is his narrow conception of this wondrous immortality; he thinks it is something that must be spoon-fed, his notion of it is that if a man have bread enough, what more can he want? And it is thus he befools the world, by asking us to put a loaf in every cupboard, by asking us to fill the house from floor to ceiling with bread: and then we shall have no difficulty in maintaining and prolonging our life. With what a revealing flash must this answer have fallen upon his stupid mind—Man shall not live by bread alone. There are fifty other ways of living: if God so will it, there are ten thousand other ways of living. Man need not receive his life from his body at all, if it please God to sustain him in some other way. Do not suppose that God is shut up to one way of keeping our human mechanism going: he could feed us with his breath, sustain us by his word, command our life to grow, and we need not resort to any of the contrivances which so vex us by their detail to sustain our bodily life.

We have always been thinking that there was but one way of sustaining our breath: man has been victimised and befooled by the delusion, that if he had no bread, he could not live. Jesus Christ comes to enlarge the possibilities of life, to say to you, "Take no care or thought for to-morrow, what shall ye eat or what ye shall drink. Life is not a question of drinking or eating. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, put your trust in the Lord and he will feed you, he will find bread for you which the soul can eat." Thus Jesus Christ strikes at the founda-

tions of our mistakes. He does not say, "Whatever you do, make bread enough." He says, "Take no thought about bread at all. Rest in God, serve God, want to do the right, want to be the good, and all these things shall be added to you." The true notion of the text is that God has innumerable ways of sustaining life, and that we live, not because we eat, but because God wills that we live. Your bread is a secondary cause, or a transient occasion, it explains next to nothing: you live not because you have had a sufficiency of bread, but because God's decree has gone forth, and your days are appointed and registered in Heaven.

Suppose I should make the meaning a little more lucid, by putting it thus. Man can make bread by one trade alone. You see the mistake there. Man can make bread only in one way of commerce—you laugh at that as a sophism; you say, "There are a thousand trades by which a man may make bread." Now make that a spiritual conception and carry it up into the highest regions, and you will understand what Jesus Christ meant when he said, "Man shall not live by bread alone." Bread does not cover the whole possibility of living, it is the divine will that settles everything: if God mean me to live, you may take away from me all bread, and all the fruits of the earth and the juices thereof, all the rams of Nebaioth and the beasts that browse in the meadows, and you will find me, forty years hence, young, strong, without a wrinkle, without one token of infirmity in my body.

That is the true conception of life. We are misled by any other. We say if we do not make bread we cannot live. That is true only within very small limits, but the limits themselves may be atheistic. I live, not because I baked a loaf yesterday and ate it to-day, but because God *wills* that I should live. Your life is not a keeping up of yourself as the resultant of some cunning contrivance of yours; your breath is in your nostrils, and God himself keeps it there. When I receive that conception, in all its fulness and poetry, into my soul, I know what Jesus Christ meant when he said, "Take no thought for the morrow: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." "Trust in the Lord, and do good," said an older speaker still, "so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." We shall have bread to eat that the world knoweth not of; our life shall not then be the vulgar result of bread-eating, but it

shall be a mystery to everybody how we live, and live on so little—that is, so little that is measurable; but he who draws his life from God's heart has more than a little to live on. Thou fool, thy loaf perishes in the handling, God's life seems to grow in the using.

The second answer. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." This is a right use of liberty as contrasted with a wrong one. Let us understand the meaning of this word, tempt. Let us put it in this broad fashion—thou shalt not make experiments upon God, thou shalt not set traps for God, thou shalt not put thyself into false relations just in order to try God and to put religion to the test. Do not run into danger for the purpose of being delivered from it. That, I take it, is the practical meaning and application of the word tempt. Perhaps we shall understand it better by taking a social illustration, for we often see things clearly by means of human analogy.

There are persons who are always tempting our friendship. They do not broadly and lovingly trust it, they do not meet us half-way in joyful and hopeful co-operation, but they continually set little traps by which they may catch us if they can. Have you had acquaintance with such disagreeable persons and their detestable habits? If they are in company, walking with you, they fall a little way behind, just to see if you will look after them. They are always testing you, tempting you, giving you opportunities of showing how much you care for them. They stay away from church just to see whether the minister will miss them. Nice people to have to deal with! They will stay away another Sunday just to see whether the people in the next pew call upon them. That is tempting friendship, putting it to little tests, setting little snares for it to catch it, and then to say, "Now I see just how much you care for me." If you have had experience of such persons, you understand what it is to tempt love, to tempt power, to tempt God.

Jesus Christ says, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Do not put thyself into foolish situations in order to draw him forth from his secret tabernacle and to work some mighty wonder for thy deliverance. Do not use him for merely individual ends and purposes, do not fall into a pit, saying, "God will come and deliver me out of this pit, and so reveal his mighty strength in

the eyes of all the people." You try rather to give God as little trouble as possible. Work up to the end of your liberty; say to him, "Father, I would come a longer way to meet thee if I could; I will do all in my little power to carry out thy will, to keep myself, to preserve my life from danger. I will not run risks for the sake of bringing thee out of heaven in order to work some mighty demonstration on my behalf in the eyes of the vulgar and the profane." That is true religion, and that is true friendship also. If I am truly your friend I do not set little traps for you. On the contrary, I take the best view of you, I love you, and if there be anything like mystery about your conduct to me, I say the misunderstanding is mine, there is nothing of purposed trial on the other side; I must be more on the alert, and I must co-operate more heartily and sympathetically with my friend. But if I be only your friend in a superficial and momentary sense, then I am always trying you, setting little gins and snares in your road and watching you, and if I am a member of your congregation, I absent myself to see whether you mark my absence, and if I am your minister, I try your love in this small way and that. Shame on us if such be the way in which we bruise the angel of friendship. Let heart meet heart and man meet God, and work with him, and do not put his almightiness to little strains and stresses, which, being interpreted, mean nothing less than an evil heart of unbelief. Work as if you were God, and trust as though you had no power of your own. Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God, but love him and co-operate with him, and be as much to him as you possibly can.

Take the third answer. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." This is constancy in worship as contrasted with caprice and fickleness.

Thou shalt worship. Take that word in opposition to *tempt*. Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God, but thou shalt worship him, give him the heart's adoration, the spirit's whole fire of love, without one spark falling elsewhere. Thy religious life should be a concentrated offering, intense as flame. That is what keeps a man right, religiously and theologically. We are not propped up by little clevernesses, mechanical, ecclesiastical, and theological; we are not shored up by some religious mechanism of man's contrivance; we are only right in proportion as our worship is right.

If we live in our ideas and syllogisms, if we secure ourselves behind the covert and defence of our own way of stating theological propositions, the very first thunderstorm that comes will carry us away. I am right only when I rightly pray, I am secure only whilst I truly worship, I am delivered from fear of death and hell only in proportion as my fellowship with the Father is intimate and sweet. Ask me to define myself in words, and I say words seem to be but temptations of controversy, propositions are only so many opportunities of contradiction, but worship, deep as the life, silent as the springs of being, mighty as the urgency of love, that it is, and that only, that keeps a man right amid all this swirl and hurry, tumult and danger, of a probationary life.

How is it with us in prayer? I do not ask how it is with us in the mere fluency of sentences: that is often a temptation and a mockery, or may easily become such; but how is it with the desire of the heart, with the out-going of the soul, with the supreme and inflexible purpose of the will? Do we love God, wait for him, trust in him, believe every syllable he has spoken, and do we know him, not by some trained act of the intellect, but by an inexplicable and ineffable operation of that sympathetic power of the soul which makes us men? I am afraid lest any of us be living a merely intellectually religious life. There is great danger of hiding ourselves behind verbal statements and trusting to formulated faiths: these are both and all useful in their way, but their way goes but a little distance—the only thing that is invincible is love, the only supreme religion is the sacrifice of the broken heart in complete and affectionate trust in the living God.

Not only must there be this worship, but following it and coming out of it there must be service. Thus the text reads, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Religion is not a contemplation only, religion is a service; religion is not a folding of the hands together and an upturning of the eyes to measurable heavens, and a silent expectation of something that shall fall upon our indolence and act upon our industry—religion is activity, service, sacrifice, devotion, whole-hearted consecration of every power of the life to one object, and if we have not attained that height, let us strive after it with sweet modesty and with burning energy. Let our heart go out in that direction

I should have pity upon a poor wounded traveller whose face was set towards his home, though he could not take one step to it. He says by that action of the face, "I want to be at home, I would God I were there. Sickness calls me, want implores me, death beckons me: I cannot go, but I can turn my eyes to the old homestead, and look as if I would be there above all other things on earth." We take the will for the deed. It is so with God: if we really purpose in our hearts to serve him, and if we fail in a great majority of the points which constitute that purpose, yet if our desire be intense and high, it will be set down as an accomplished fact.

These, then, are the three answers which Jesus Christ delivered to the devil's temptations. One point before we look at the answers as a whole.

Jesus Christ said, in answer to the devil's quotation of Scripture, "It is written *again*." What is the meaning of that? It is that the Bible is not made to be of one text; the meaning is that you must compare Scripture with Scripture. It is possible to fasten the mind upon one single line, so as to miss the meaning of the whole revelation of the Bible. We have to compare spiritual things with spiritual—it is written here, and it is written there, and the two writings must be brought together in intelligent, critical, and spiritual comparison. It is written, and it is written again, and the one passage must be read in the light of the other. You must have the whole Bible, and not an isolated text, to rest upon. There is a biblical spirit as well as a biblical letter. Is it not possible that some of us have fixed our minds upon some one passage of Scripture that is really torturing us with agony we dare not explain to our chosen minister? Whereas, if it could be pointed out, he might be able to say to us, "It is so written there, but it is written again," and thus the light might come and all the joy of liberty. If there is any man here whose soul is afflicted by one special passage of Scripture, and I can be of any service in showing him other writings which illuminate it, it will be the joy of my life to be of that service to any soul bowed down by such distress.

Looking at the answers as a whole, three things strike me. First of all, they were *written* answers. This is no matter of ready repartee; this is not a question of the quickness of Christ's

intelligence: this is not an unexpected flash of fire by friction that had not been counted upon—this is quotation; this is rest upon the revealed word; this is an endorsement of all that was written in the then Holy Scriptures. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. You are not called upon to be geniuses in your conflicts with the devil; you are only called upon to know your Bibles well. Where is the man who knows his Bible well? and yet where is there a man in England who has not some portion of the Bible humming in his head, so much so that he thinks he knows it—who when called upon for quotation, round, complete, direct, can give it? What wonder that the devil play his game successfully with men whose Scripture quotations halt and tremble for very weakness, being uncertain how the words stand, and not knowing whether the point of the sword be the hilt or the hilt the point? Who can fight so, now trying one end and now the other? Let us read the Bible all over again; get it into our hearts as a letter and a spirit—yea, let it dwell in us richly, for as there is but one verb, one number, one light, so there is but one Book—all other books are but broken lights of that. Jesus Christ went directly to the supernatural; he went to revealed truth. It is marvellous that amid all these replies he does not make what we should call an original observation. He quotes, and if you search further into the matter you will find that he quotes—*himself*.

These answers were not only written, but they were simple. There is no deep metaphysic here, which bewilders the heads of poor believers, and makes them giddy with exercises of unwonted intricacy, and calling for unwonted intellectual energy. Great answers are always simple, simplicity being understood as the last result of wisdom—not something shallow and superficial, but as the ultimate result of processes which spread over the whole being of God. The whole movement of civilization is towards simplicity: every now and then we startle ourselves by the simplicity of answers which we thought would have been infinitely profound. We had been looking for words six feet long, and lo! all the meaning we wanted was trembling in a word of one syllable, brief and beautiful as a dewdrop when the sun inflames it with tender glory. O, thou groper and seeker after deep things in relation to the kingdom of heaven, thou who dost want to climb up to the

skies by some clever staircase of thine own making, know thee that the way is simple in the sense already defined. It expresses God's eternity, and yet it bows itself down to thy littleness and weakness. "It is written"—be that thine answer. "It is written again"—be that thy further reply. Never go to search for keen retort or flashing repartee within thine own genius: the answer is not in thee, it is in God. Strike no match of thine own wit; pluck thy lightnings from the heavens—they never fail.

Then the answers were not only written and simple, they were authoritative. They are not quoted as conjectures, they are not submitted as suggestions. When a man goes into war, he must not take with him a sword that has to be tried, but one that has been tested and approved. God knows exactly what temptations every one of us has to endure, and he has written down for us the exact answer. If we try any other reply, we shall get a retort from the enemy; but if we accumulate God's answers, and hurl them at him, he will leave us, and angels will come and minister unto us.

Let us be thankful that in all these answers Jesus Christ has said nothing that we ourselves are not entitled to say. When the devil tells me that I must live by bread alone, I say, "What a liar! I can live in any way God sees fit to appoint. He is not shut up to one way of keeping man's breath in his nostrils. Thou art a liar!" When the devil says to me, "Do something rash, just for the purpose of testing whether God does love you;" when the devil says to me, as he did to some magazine writer not long ago, "Now let two hospitals be chosen, and in connection with the one there shall be prayer, and in connection with the other there shall be no prayer, and let us see in which of the hospitals the patients get better sooner"—I say, "O, what folly, what tempting of God, what trap-setting, what small experimenting, what neat ways of forming ourselves into an innumerable jury for the purpose of putting the Almighty to the test." Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Providence is not a question of balloting, and snare-setting, and testing and tempting; it is a question of trusting, living in and with God, and knowing that an inch is not an ell, and that a part is not the whole.

I am tempted to tempt God. I want him to bless my wheat-fields. I, speaking out of my folly, say to heaven, "God, if thou

wouldst give me, a praying man, a great crop, and starve the fields of that profane person over the road, people would begin to think there is a God in heaven—do it.” It is a superficial speech, utterly shallow and narrow, and it is a temptation or unworthy trial of God.

When the devil says, “Worship me, and I will give thee the world,” then I am entitled to get angry. There is a keener accent in the last answer, “Get thee hence”—the dog was ordered behind. If we could speak with more emphasis we should get a clearer path for our feet, but if we are “if-you-please”-ing the devil, and asking him to be good enough to get out of the way, if we are saying, “By your leave, Satanic majesty, we will go forward,” do you suppose he will give us his leave that we may advance? I tell you religion has lost its emphasis, religion has fallen down before conventional moods and standards, and has lost that high accentuation which made its speech heard above the hurtling storm. Hear the Blessed One, see his flushed face, hear that new tone in his voice—we have not heard it before in these readings, “Get thee hence!” Speak with keener emphasis, with broader meaning—open your throat to the fulness of its compass, and let your words shoot out like cannon balls, and God will give you victory.

“Then the devil leaveth him,” with bowed limbs and shrunken neck, and eyes fastened on the dust, crestfallen, jaw-broken, his head a-swim with a new dizziness, with purpose malignant as hell burning in his heart, but every energy of his being collapsed, made limp, flaccid, his backbone melted like wax in the fire. He left him. Whether he will return, we shall see as the story advances.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we would begin the year in thy strength, and in all the hope of thine infinite grace. Not one day would we live without thee, every morning would we be found at thy gates, and every eventide with a new song upon our lips. This is our purpose, how much greater is thine intent concerning us. Thou hast given us this lifting up of heart: we speak not in view of our own inspiration, our tongue utters what thou hast already told the heart to say. Let thine Amen be greater than our prayer, yea let thine answer overflow the letter of our petition as the waters cover the channels of the sea. From this day forth may we all be thine, may no man call himself his own, may the cross be the object of our love, and the kingdom of Christ the supreme hope of our life. Forgetting the things that are behind, may we press towards the things that are before—better things, higher and altogether greater; by a mighty and daily constraint of the heart may we be drawn onward to the things which are full of God and therefore full of heaven.

We give thee unanimous and unfeigned thanks for all the mercies of the year to which we have said farewell. Within that year we have wedded the bride, and rocked the cradle, and dug the grave; we have heard the birds sing and seen the flowers die, and now it is gone away with the story of our temptation and our sin, our many prayers and our feeble efforts. The Lord help us in the year that is now coming to be nobler in every purpose, more steadfast in every grace: may we be marked in our whole life by a broader and stronger charity, and be a constancy which no wind of temptation can shake. Where there is particular fear, may there be particular help, and if any one is desiring this night to offer special prayer for special mercies in circumstances critical, full of danger and distress, the Lord hear us on the behalf of such, and send gracious answers of light and hope to suffering children of men.

The Lord hear us in all our prayers, and cause us to love his altar, with a higher affection. The Lord save us from all delusions, all vain notions, all unworthy purposes, and fill us with a consuming desire to know himself and his truth more profoundly. If any man have a quarrel against any, let the quarrel cease just now. If any man have an uncharitable thought about his fellow man, let the heart be cleansed of that evil thought just now. If any man have consciously done wrong to any fellow-creature, work in him an immediate desire to apologise and repair and repent both towards man and towards God. Wherein our purposes are right, strengthen them every one; wherein our counsel is founded in vanity and marked by feebleness, the Lord turn it upside down and visit us with the darkness of confusion.

The Lord pity us, the Lord forgive us. Our prayer is not of our own utterance, nor is it offered in our own name. We pray in the name of the

Priest, the Intercessor, the One Mediator between God and man. Remembering his cross, his precious blood, his infinite sacrifice, we commit our prayer to his priesthood, and we know the answer will be great and sure. Amen.

THE TEMPTATION (*continued*).

OUR purpose will be limited to the setting forth of certain practical lessons suggested by the conflict, which may apply to ourselves in all the weary strife and painful discipline and all but incessant temptations of our own earthly course.

Shall I startle you very much if I say that there is some *comfort* to be derived even from temptation? Shall I for the moment depart from the usual course of preachers and instead of dwelling on the dark side of temptation, show you how light comes in that black hour? There are times enough in the year when I may seek to afflict you with considerations that pain the soul; what if, for the time being, we get lifted in tenderer mood altogether, and speak light to those who sit in darkness? This is of the Lord's doing, and it is as marvellous in our eyes as it is consolatory to our heart.

For example, temptation implies *a measure of goodness* on the part of the man who is tempted. The orchard robber does not go into the orchard in the winter time: he says there is nothing to be gained; why skulk behind the hedge: why watch the doors of the house, why lay plots and schemes for the robbery of this orchard? There is not one particle of fruit to be had upon all these winter-bound branches. The robber of orchards comes in fruit time; it is the fruit that tempts him; it is the fruit that is worth having; he does not want the barren branch, how great and far-reaching soever it may be, he wants the ripening fruit—for that his fingers itch.

Is it not so, in some degree, with regard to the assault of the enemy? There is some *virtue* he would pluck from us, there is some noble temper he would spoil, there is some high desire he would mar, there is some meditated prayer just taking wing for Heaven that he would turn aside. Reflect, then, that your temptations may be, from the diabolical side, but so many indications that you are worth tempting.

Then let us once for all get rid of the delusion that temptation is *sin*. That thought has troubled many an honest heart. A man

feels himself strongly drawn in a wrong direction, and he says, "I am a very bad man." Once let a man's hope in himself through God fail, and he will be the very thing that he fears. The temptation doubles itself in its breadth and momentum by suggesting that itself is sin. The best are the most tempted; we have already seen that in the course of our exposition, when we read these words together, one after the other in sharp succession—"This is my beloved Son. Then was Jesus led up of the spirit to be tempted of the devil." We all remember instances in which the thought that temptation was sin utterly took the sunshine out of our life. You are tempted to take that drink that has ruined you. You say, "I have as good as done it: there is a pull at my heart which wants me to do it, and if I have already drunk it in my heart I may as well drink it with my lips. I have committed my sin spiritually, I may as well perfect it externally." Beware lest you give temptation sharpness, leverage, and the use of all the mechanical powers, by considering that temptation is itself sin. Do not say, "What a bad heart I have, or I could not be tempted so;" on the contrary, reason thus—"What a strong enemy I have, how he plagues me, and does he play his game for nothing? Is he laying all his plots and schemes and plans that he may win a rotten straw?" Through the force and urgency and number of your temptations, see the grandest side of your nature. Who wastes his guns on empty citadels? Who wastes his fire in burning up that which is itself valueless for all the purposes of cleansing and purification? In proportion as you are great and noble and heavenly-minded will be the force and persistency of the diabolic assault.

There is yet another streak of comfort in this dreary discipline. The struggle *excites interest in two worlds*. In this great battle you find the devil, you find humanity, and you find angels. The last verse reads, "Then the devil leaveth him, and behold angels came and ministered unto him." We are watched. Seeing then that we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses—what then? Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. "Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness." Then he will be *alone*. He will be struck at where there is no friend to help him. Not so! Put the first verse and the last together. No

man was there, but all God's angels thronged the assaulted Christ. Lord, open our eyes that we may see the reality of things. We think we are alone when all high Heaven is round about us, and every angel is on guard to defend our life and consummate our purpose. We are blind, we have mistaken the ceiling for the sky, and walls of our own building have we mistaken for thine unmeasured horizon. Give us accuracy and farness of vision.

How differently—let us dream a moment, wildly, almost blasphemously—the verse might have finished, namely thus, “Then the devil leaveth him, and behold his angels, black as himself, pitiless as his own heart, came and dragged him away.” O wild dream, nearing the border line of blasphemy, yet not without its wholesome suggestion, for what was impossible in the case of Christ is possible in the case of every one of us, for we are so frail, so short-sighted, so open to seduction and false lure. Shall it be said of me, of you, “Then the devil leaveth him, and sent hounds of hell to drag the wounded soul into the pit. Then the devil, having bruised his heart and thrown him down and cast him to the ground with infinite superiority of strength, left him to be fetched home by some hound of hell”? I hit my body in the eye, I blacken both my eyes, I push and thrust sharp knuckles into my eye, lest, having preached to others, I myself become a castaway. What I say unto one I say unto all—Watch. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. We fight not with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against forces impalpable and all but irresistible.

I cannot look then at the temptation in this light, without seeing somewhat of *the grandeur of MAN*. Two worlds contend for his possession; the angels want him, and the damned host gnash their teeth upon him and long to devour him. What is he? Some dying insect; some frail, animated dust, some little creature that can be consumed utterly as to his soul as well as to his body, before the moth? It is not so that I read the biblical account of my own nature; the divinity stirs within me, I can utter vast prayers, I can stretch my supplications onward till the stars fall under them, like earth-lamps dimly seen through infinite mists. Do not tell me that I am little and mean and worthless; I know what I am when the devil would give all he

has to get me, and when Christ laid down his life that I may never die. Not the metaphysician, not the psychologist, not the philosopher, can take from me by long and weary-winding reasoning my grandeur. I feel it, I knew it; when the long-strained argument has ceased its murky and confusing eloquence, I rise and say, "I feel that I am the bearer of the image of the divine." My consciousness cannot be argued down, my vocabulary may be exhausted, my intelligence may be put to shame by the superior knowledge of many a disputant, but when all that can be said on the other side has completed itself in many a weary period, my consciousness rises and says, "Thou art a king's son; claim thine heirship and insist on the possession of thine inheritance." Tell me if you have not had moments of consciousness in which you have forgotten your littleness and have stood out in heroic breadth and grandeur, transformed, your very clothes shining with light and your face aflame with a lustre not thrown upon it from any external lamp.

Thus would I gather comfort from the temptations of life. Doubt yourself if your temptations are *few*. The man who sleeps in a wooden hut, with not one thing of any value whatever upon his person or within his residence says, "I hear a good deal of burglaries and felonies of one kind and another, but do you know I have no faith in the rumours. *I* am never assaulted, *I* have never seen a burglar, no man ever interferes with me; I fancy, therefore, that all this talk about the burglarious invasion of houses is folly." Can you account for that man's never having a visit from a burglar? How would you account for his exemption from that social pest? Instantly you would say, "That man has nothing worth taking; burglars do not waste their time on such, they go where the prey is." So I say to thee, my tempted friend, wearying thyself out with much vivisection and cross-examination of thy poor tortured heart. If the temptations are many, it may be because the possessions are great. Take this view of the assault and strengthen thyself in God.

Beware of the temptation which comes with an IF in its mouth. *If* thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. *If* thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down. Suspicion may be the beginning of ruin. Suspect your sonship and you are undone at once. For a moment begin to wonder if you are really

a child of God, and the battle is half won by the enemy. The old divines used to preach the grand and savoury doctrine of assurance. They used to say, faith is the milk, assurance is the cream. With puritanic zeal, but with a divine enthusiasm, they used to urge us to claim all the enjoyment and security of distinct assurance. Have we escaped from their terms and from their theology? Then we have escaped from a rich banquet, that we might feed ourselves upon the empty wind. Recall the great and noble words of Scripture—"Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be; if sons, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." There is substance in that talk; it is not a coloured vapour, it is the substance of the soul's distinct recognition of certain divine securities which God has promised never to withdraw from the faithful and loving soul. Can you "Abba, Father," cry? Can you ever with your soul's tenderest trust say "God is my Father"? Then, never let the devil write his big and hideous *if* upon your faith. Fatherhood like God's does not change with the wind; this divine relationship is not a question of the barometer; this acceptance on the part of the divine Father is not a question of your physical sufferings and moods and indigestions and divers infirmities. Remember that you built your house upon a rock, and do not suppose any fog can overthrow it. If you had built the edifice of your life upon the shifting fog it would not have been worth one moment's purchase. If your foundation is right, the air will presently be clear. You know what visitations of fog we have had, and suppose any one had said to you, "All the great buildings of London are now in imminent danger," you would have smiled at the childish suggestion. Why? Because nothing has interfered with the foundations of those buildings. Fogs break no slates, fogs cannot even break the glass; how then should fogs shake the rocks and make the towers totter?

It is even so with our spiritual life. These temptations and times of depression, sad feeling, low-heartedness and want of courage, are but the fogs that come for a moment. You are founded on a *rock*, then lift up your heads—the fogs will pass and every star will be found to be firm in its place. As for those of you who serve the devil, let me tell you that you are either under the dominion of God or you are under the dominion of

God's enemy. Do not suppose that there is a third master. It is God or mammon. Do not suppose that if you escape religion you escape all service—bondage—you are the slaves of the devil, or you are the slaves of Christ. Let me tell you one or two things about your master. He was once mine and I know him. I have studied his plan. I know every move he makes. He has only three moves with obvious variations on the chess-board of life. He has only *one world* to offer, and he offered it to Christ. "All these things," said he, "will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." *All*—a little ALL! It appeared great to his eye as it appears great to our eye, but it is a little all, and how infinitely little it must have appeared to him who made all the worlds! If you have devised a little light that will shine ten yards further than the light which somebody else has devised, you will have column after column in the newspaper about it, and it will appear a great light. But if you had made one single sun-beam, you would laugh at the greatness of your supposed illustrious flame. If you could see all the solar system and all the outlying stellar universe, circuit beyond circuit, flame beyond flame, and then be called to look at some little jet of man's contrivance, you would smile at the mighty epithets which he applies to its definition. The devil looks upon the world and says, "All these things will I give thee," to a Man who made the universe, and stands above it, and sets on the proudest sun the imprint of his footstep. Do not be deceived by nearness, and by small proverbs, and by immediate possessions. Have bread to eat the world knoweth not of; have the high acquaintanceship of God, and then the petty fellowship of earthly princes will dwindle into its proper insignificance.

I will tell you another thing about your master which will make you ashamed of him. He trades upon my *weakness*; he never comes to me in my strength; for whenever he sees me a little *weary*, then he comes with all his force. When I have fasted forty days and forty nights and become conscious of painful hunger, then he slouches up and tells me his little plan for bread-making out of stones. When I feel tired at night, all my energy gone out of me, he comes to me and says, "You could do a great deal better than this, you know, if you left the pulpit and took up with another line of life that I could put you into—why, there is

no telling what you might do." And I say, "I do feel tired, I wish I could escape this weariness." And he says, with pleasant voice, lowered into a soft minor, so dear to true confidence, "I can show you how." The beast never faced me when I was strong, he was afraid of me when the God shone in my face, but whenever he has caught me weak and depressed and sad, with tears in my eyes, at the grave-side, at the bed-side of my dying friend, then he has come to me and said, "I can get you out of all this." Be ashamed of such a master, disown him, write a better name on your life-banner—he is a coward, a liar, a murderer from the beginning, a separator of brethren, a deceiver, a usurper. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

And as for you, poor'soul, barely living, I want a word with you. You are a misunderstood man, persons come to you and say that you ought not to do this, and ought not to do that, and you know it so well that their exhortation is but so much vitriol poured into an open wound. They call you a bad man and they have no hope of you, and everybody has left you now but your mother, and sometimes you think she is going too, but if she goes out at one door she will come back through another. When a man's mother leaves him, no angel can come to minister unto him; he is ready then for the hounds that drag him down. Shall I set myself up against you and boast and triumph over you? No! Why? Because you have been sorely tempted, and I may not have been tempted so sorely. It took you a long time to fall, I might have fallen in half the time: who am I then that I should taunt you and mock you? Be it far from me to practise this kind of reproach—it is the meanest use of morality.

And you have lived a poor, poor life and are next to nothing to look at now from a spiritual point of view, and you are going almost to give up. Do not. The friends around you know what temptations you have fallen into, but as Robert Burns says in one of the sweetest of his poems,

"They know not what's resisted."

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, if we are remembered by thee, it matters not by whom we are forgotten ; thou dost engrave our names on the palms of thine hands, the walls of Zion are continually before thee, and sooner shall our eyes behold the falling of all that is in thy heavens than we shall see that thou hast forgotten them that trust thee. Whilst thou art mindful of thy children, may thy children be mindful of their Lord. May our right hand forget its cunning, and our tongue cleave to the roof of our mouth if we forget Jerusalem, and prefer it not before our chief joy. May we be enabled to utter these things by the intelligence and the ardour of our love. Truly thou hast remembered us in our low estate, thou wert mindful of us before we had returned, and whilst yet we were in the far off wilderness, even then thine eye pitied and thine arm was outstretched in salvation. And now that we have returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, and are enfolded with those that love and follow thee, surely thy remembrance of us will be quicker than ever, and thy tenderness will flow towards us in perpetual fulness.

We have to bless thee for thy gentle care, thy long-suffering, thy great patience. We have outworn our friends, we have tried and vexed with sore distress those who bare us, and behold thy love is greater than our mother's, and thy patience has been without limit. We live in thy long-suffering : if thou wert strict to mark iniquities, we could not stand before thee in judgment. Thou dost look upon us in thy Son Jesus Christ, our one priest and our only Saviour, and see in him and through his work ; behold thou dost count us of great value ; yea, thou dost set store by us, as if we were needful to the completion of thy happiness.

The very hairs of our head are all numbered ; thou dost count our steps one by one, our downsitting and our uprising are not too mean to be noticed in Heaven ; thou dost beset us behind and before, and lay thine hand upon us ; thou dost send thine angels to watch our life and to bless us with many benedictions. Thou hast filled our cup, thou hast made our bed, thou hast kept our dwelling-place, thou hast been round about us as a defence of fire. What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us ? We are here this day to bow down our heads and to say that we are unprofitable because unclean ; we have come that we might make common confession of sin, and unanimously implore the exercise of thy forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our blessed and infinite Redeemer. Wherein our conscience is oppressed as with a great weight, wherein our life is made gloomy by the infinite darkness of aggravated sin, let the Lord manifest himself towards us in peculiar concern and sympathy, and look upon us through all the work accomplished for us by his Son Christ Jesus. Wherein we have spoiled the week thou didst give us

to work in, let thy pardon come to us. Wherein the days have been blotted by our unskilful hands, wherein we have returned thy gifts perverted and dishonoured, let the Lord be merciful unto us, remembering that we came of the dust, and that we are in ourselves but as a wind that cometh for a little time and then passeth away. The Lord's love be greater than his judgment, and the mercy of the Lord shall be more than all our sin.

We bless thee that our desire is still towards the light; once we loved darkness, now we pray for the broadening light of the day, that it may spread over us until the whole sky be filled with its brightness and there be no shadow left, but we stand in the infinite fulness of such glory as our souls can now receive. We bless thee, too, that we care for thy truth, that we look into thy book with wistful eyes and eager heart, desiring to see and to hear what God the Lord will say. Enable us to see the beauty of thy word, to feel the nearness of the sympathy of thy spirit, and may thy revelation destroy all earthly delusions, all foolish prejudices, all narrow conceptions of our own imagining, and may we stand not in our own thinking, but in the breadth and glory of the divine revelation.

We commend one another to thy tender care. Help us to pray for one another, with a full and anxious heart. Thou knowest what we need—we are always needing, our want is daily, our life is a long cry of necessity, and a long moan of pain. So would we always have the Lord's fulness near and the Lord's blessing at hand; we would not be for one moment without thee, for in that moment would our ruin be wrought. Where there is desire to know thee better, let the light increase in lustre and in breadth; where there is bitterness of soul on account of sin, let the infinite sweetness of thy forgiving grace be tasted; where there is a vow to live a nobler life, enable him who took the oath to fulfil it to its letter; where there is a heart struggling against difficulty, temptation, distress of mind, body, or estate, let the angel of the Lord help the struggler, and bring him into more than victory. Where there is self-conceit, self-trust, consciousness that all that is needed lies within human power, the Lord consume the delusion as with fire from Heaven, and work in every self-righteous heart the spirit of child-like humility, of Christian modesty.

The Lord help us when we need help most. The angel of the Lord be near us when the enemy would come in as a flood, and may the delivering Spirit redeem us from despair and set our tried souls again high on the everlasting hills where they will catch all the brightness of the hope that is in God. Pity us when we are proud of ourselves, fight not against us when we give way before thee and fall down in penitence and expectation, and let the light of thy countenance fall upon us—it will never be a burden, it will be a deliverance and a hope. If any man have a quarrel against any, let the quarrel now cease, let the spirit of reconciliation seize the heart from which it has gone in exile. If any man cry unto thee because of a peculiar trial which he cannot put into words, the Lord read his heart and secretly answer his prayer.

Remember the stranger within our gates, the traveller, the man, the woman, far from home, great seas rolling between them and the place they love, the Lord be with such and give to them to feel that this is their Father's house, and by the elevation of Christian fellowship, by the flooding of the soul with all that is Christian and divine, may there be an uplifting above all temporary separation and distress.

The Lord's blessing go beyond us—to the sick chamber, where there is danger, where there is pain, where death has almost taken possession ; to the prison, where the prisoner languishes and is being taught the value of moral reflection by his isolation and punishment, to the sea where men are in trouble and in great fear, to the field of battle where the soldier's life is one keen anxiety ; yea, let thy blessing go the whole earth round, omitting none from its baptism of light, and let the earth feel that it is still in God's hand, yea, in God's heart, the earth that has borne the cross, and shall one day see the throne of the Saviour's glory. Amen.

Matthew iv. 12-17.

12. Now when Jesus had heard (and *because* he had heard) that John was cast into prison (at Machœrus), he departed into Galilee (by the shortest route, through Samaria).

13. And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim :

14. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

15. The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles ;

16. The people which sat in darkness saw great light : and to them which sat in the region of the shadow of death light is sprung up.

17. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent : for the kingdom of heaven is at hand

WORK AFTER TEMPTATION.

THE eleventh verse reads—"Then the devil leaveth him, and behold angels came and ministered unto him ;" and the twelfth verse reads—"Now, when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee." You must not imagine that the events in the eleventh and twelfth verses followed one another in immediate succession. Jesus had been exercising something like an eight months' ministry in Judea, when he heard that John was cast into prison. Still, I cannot but feel that the temptation prepared the great Worker for his marvellous toil. He was in all points tempted like as we are ; how otherwise could he have been our priest and Saviour in every sense of those immeasurable terms? No angel could have preached to me : he would not have understood me, his language would be unknown, he would have nothing in common with my deepest and most painful experience, he would be altogether above me, too grand and sublime for my spiritual conception ; it was needful that he who was to speak the universal language, should pass under the

universal experience : he should know the devil, he should have met him as it were face to face, he should have felt the keenness of his subtlest approaches, and the blow of his heaviest assault. Jesus Christ was thus prepared by temptation to preach the gospel to the world, and indeed to do all the work for the world which he had from eternity undertaken to accomplish.

Men are fitted for work in various ways. Some men are fitted for it by the reading of many books hard and difficult to be understood, others are fitted by a wear and tear that seems to have no expression adequate to itself in human words, a continual vexation of the soul and distress of all its best faculties, so that they come up out of great agonies to speak tender words, and they bring themselves out of the night of intolerable despair to utter the word of benediction. But no man can be prepared for any deep and vital work in the world who has not gone through the school of the devil. You cannot be taught to preach by reading many books, how long and eloquent soever. You overshoot my life ; I must hear something in your tone which will enable me to identify you as of my own kindred. Now and again there must break from your heart's voice tones and accents which tell me that you too have been in the pit, have been dragged through the lake of fire, and have understood what it is to be almost—gone. He has wonderful influence over me who can pity me in the distresses of my temptation. He who can only make my intellect wonder, touch my imagination with new and flashing lights, has but momentary fascination for me ; I own it, and bid the man farewell ; but he who knows the devil in and out, all the temptations in me, and who has come away from the life-battle feeling that the enemy is no small one, but subtle in suggestion and mighty in influence, and who says to me, " The battle is very heavy, do not underrate it ; your strength will be tried to its very last fibre and throb, but God will help you ; your extremity shall be his opportunity "—then he takes me under his influence, and I yield myself to him and call him, not preacher only, and teacher, wise and true, but friend sympathetic, with whose soul mine has fellowship, and we can go together both in blessed and hopeful union to the common throne of the church, from which is dispensed the blessing which is better than bread, the word which gives the soul immortality.

Have you been fitted for your work? If so, why are you not doing it? To be qualified and yet to be idle, is to incur the severest displeasure of man and of God. How many more books are you going to read before you begin to speak? How much longer are you going to study the providence of God amongst the children of men before you begin to open your mouth in witness? How many more sermons and prayers are you going to hear and endorse before you begin in the market-place to say, "My scales are kept in Heaven and my standards are set up in the sanctuary of the sky"? It is time that some of us were proving our fitness by our activity; sad is the sight of a man qualified, evidently fitted to do certain work, and yet not doing it. We have all heard of that wonderful stone in the quarry out of which Baalbec was builded; it was a great stone, it was cut out of the rock with great labour, the mason squared it, the sculptor chiselled it, nothing more that the tool could do to it remained to be done, and yet there it lay in the quarry, not lifted to its proper eminence, not set amid its designed surroundings, a gigantic miscarriage, a horrible failure; fitted, made beautiful, almost speaking in its perfected sculpture, and yet there it was lying with the rubbish, when it might have been shining like a living presence in some magnificent temple.

What is true of that stone is surely true of some of us. We have been a long time at school, yet we never use our learning for the good of men. We have been much trained in music, yet we do little but mumble in the vocal worship of Almighty God. We have read many books, yet we are silent as the grave. We have passed through many a temptation, but the word of sympathy never falls from our lips. We have proved the vanity of the world and we have never told the young that the world is a gigantic lie and life but an empty wind apart from God and the infinite Saviour Jesus Christ. How much longer therefore shall we be qualified to do much and yet be doing little? How much longer shall we have studied the eloquence which is taught only in the expensive school of experience, and yet shut up our lips in criminal dumbness? Our Saviour Jesus Christ having been qualified for his work, went to it. Arise, let us go hence.

When Jesus heard that John was cast into prison—cast into prison by Herod, because the Baptist had reproved the ruler for

his evil ways—then the work ceased. Shut up the preacher in prison and you will shut up Christ's Church, would seem to be the short and easy method of persons who take superficial views of divine truth. A man is plaguing you with his remonstrances : shut him up in gaol, and there will be an end of your trouble. That would be a fool's speech to make, if ever you did make one. You can shut up the worker, but can you shut up the work? You can silence the individual minister—what is he but a little creature in the presence and in relation to the power of a reigning monarch? But how can you shut up the divine truth? John was cast into prison, but there came a great light. Now, Herod, rattle your gaol-keys, get them all out and shut up the *light* in gaol. O the mockery, the satire, the instructive sarcasm of the King that reigns over all! John is incarcerated, and the Lord sends a great light over the lands, and tauntingly bids the kings of the earth shut it up in their dungeons! So it is with the progress of divine truth. A minister dies, but the light increases: the individual speaker comes to the end of his discourse, but there are silent and subtle ministries evermore proceeding with infinite effect to work out the decree and purpose of God. The eloquent thunder ceases, the silent light goes on. This Christian kingdom is a ministry of light; it is a marvellous light, it is a great light, it is impalpable, intangible, immeasurable; it is around us, and we cannot touch it; we put out our hands and dash through it, and still it stands there, an angel that fills the whole horizon. Fear not: your great Baptist is mewed up in prison and the axe is being whetted that shall take off his head: the next thing that axe will have to do will be to strike the beams off the sun. Can it perform that deed, or is the axe not yet made that can shatter one ray from the source out of which it falls?

When Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison he departed, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet. Can a man not go from one city or province to another, without fulfilling some old and sacred word of prophecy? The answer to that inquiry is "No." Did you come to church to-day by the divine decree? The answer to that inquiry is "Yes." You could not help coming. Do not suppose that we are here by accident. We are here that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet. Do not isolate yourself from the great

body of history and the great stream of prophecy, and say that you do just what you like. You think you do: it is your delusion, and it will prove in the long run to be a source of unrest and pain to you. Let me feel my connection with all my kind; let me feel that I am in God's hands, and that the bounds of my habitation are fixed; let me feel that my liberty is itself but part of the divine law. Then there will come into my soul a deep rest, a gentle peace, a profound assurance, and though the mountains be removed and carried into the depths of the sea, yet I shall remain at rest in the very heart of God.

There is nothing trifling in your life. As to whether you shall live on this side of the street or that, will be settled for you if you will put yourself quietly into the hand of God. Why do you undertake anything on your own account? Why do you say you will do this or do that, purely of your own suggestion and to carry out some motion of your own will? I will not go out until the Master sends for me, I will tarry in dark Egypt till the angel says, "The way is clear: arise and go:" yea, I will sit down in prison until Pharaoh send for me by God's suggestion. Could I talk so I should feel that life were worth living, and as for to-morrow's letters, and difficulties, and fears, and perils, and distresses, I would meet them all after a long night's deep slumber, and they would vanish before my strength. Oh, fussy little fool, a self-manager and self-controller, sit thee down and learn that to obey is better than to be clever, and to wait upon God is sometimes the sublimest genius.

Thus wondrously does the Old Testament overlap the New. Men who are critical upon these matters tell us that some two hundred and sixty times there are references in the New Testament to the Old, and thus the Old and the New overlap and intertwine, and the two Testaments are one revelation, as the morning and the evening are one day. Now and again we see a little into the details of life. This is an instance in point—Jesus arises, leaving Nazareth to dwell in Capernaum, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet. Details vex us; we cannot piece them together and make anything of unity and shape of them; they fall to pieces under our clumsy fingers. Now and again there is a rent, and I see somewhat of the meaning of detail: I see that there is a hand jointing

them, articulating them, and behold it is making order out of confusion. Lord, take up all the details of my life: they are exceedingly incoherent, and they baffle me; they sometimes almost make a non-believer of me; they sometimes arise and fall upon my life altogether as if they would crush it. I bless thee for these little peeps into this inner working of thine, about the hairs of my head, the guiding of my steps, the ordering of my habitation—undertake for me altogether—let me do nothing but in fulfilment of thy providence.

He came and dwelt in Capernaum. Thou art exalted unto heaven, take care lest thou be thrust down into hell. It is an awful and sacred thing to have a good neighbour, to come into contact with a good man, to have amongst us a voice of fire, a teaching of love, a ministry of light. He came and dwelt in Capernaum. He came as the light came into this house this morning, without making any noise, but filling the whole space. He came without noise or cry or tremulous voice, but Capernaum felt that there was a ghost, a spirit, a strange influence within itself, and that Capernaum, if it grow not right up into heaven and be absorbed into Zion, will be thrust down into hell. Our privileges become our judgments.

Zabulon and Nephthalim, Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—are these a mere cluster of words? What, the Gentiles already? His beginnings are like endings, his first words have somewhat of the ripeness and mellowness of high climaxes. Already is there flashing even in secondary light some gleam of divine lustre upon the Gentile places of the earth? Does the word *Gentiles* occur so soon in the sacred narrative? We are Gentiles. Whenever we see that word we should say, "There is something about us; what is it?" It is like seeing our name in a foreign book, like opening a work written in a language we cannot understand, and seeing our name broadly in the middle of the page. We are arrested, and we wonder what it means. God's purpose is one that girdles the whole earth: it takes it little by little, but it takes it all in, and the meadow is not jealous because the mountain-tops catch the light first. You have stood on a mountain-top to watch the sun rise—why didn't you stay in the valley? Because you said, "The mountain-top will catch the first light; let us be, therefore, on the highest possible point." And did the valleys

below retire from the earth and say they would never grow any more gardens and meadows, and any more harvests of wheat, because the snowy peaks caught the first blessing and warmed to the earliest kiss? Thou art but a poor reader of history who objectest that the Jews caught the first gleam of the new morning. I would sooner think of yonder sweet blue Lucerne water grumbling and working itself up into gruff noises and tumultuous storms because Pilatus had the first gleam upon his rocky head, or because the snows of the Rhigi blushed with the dawn before the waters of the lake felt its touch. A little more time and that sun will fill the earth, a little more time and this Sun of Righteousness will shoot out his glories until every land shall be bright with the pure lustre of divine truth.

When Jesus heard that John was cast into prison he came to the front. It might have been an excellent reason for departing again into the wilderness to avoid danger. It would have been so had the kingdom which they came to reveal and establish been a kingdom of mere sentiment or a conception of merely and purely intellectual energy. This is how the Christian kingdom has advanced from the first ages until now. The front rank of soldiers all shot—Forward next rank, over the dead bodies! That has been done and is being done, and none can hinder the progress of this divine kingdom, connected as that progress is with a heroism that is not of human inspiration, but of divine beginning and strength. Where there is danger there should be a provocation of courage.

We know nothing about courage now. There are some texts I dare not preach from. Dare I preach from this text—"None of these things move me, yea, I count not my life dear unto me that I may finish the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus"? You will never hear me preach from that text. It would burn like a conscious lie upon my coward lips. These things do move me. I am annoyed by trifles, discouraged by trumpety circumstances of a temporary nature—dare I preach from a hero's words? There have, however, been times in the Church when Christians have been heroic. We read in history not more than three hundred years old of Christians who having heard that John was cast into prison went forward to take his place. I was reading only a few days ago some such occurrence.

The Christians of one town were all driven into one dungeon : they were gathered together and shut up into one prison, and the executioner came to them and took them out one by one, having first put a muffler over the eyes of the doomed victim. He led him out in the presence of the others to the place of execution, and put a knife through his throat, and leaving him half dead, he took the muffler off and went back for the next, the knife streaming with blood held between his teeth, as he tied the muffler over the eyes of the next victim. And twenty were done so, and forty and sixty, and seventy and eighty-eight, and that human butcher failed, not the Christian heroism. It was so that your liberties were bought. We were redeemed not with corruptible things, but with precious blood, and we sit here to-day, quiet, perhaps indifferent, as the result of human blood. Are we worthy of our traditions? We dare not go out if it is raining, we take offence because of trifles, we leave the work because of some little pique, not worthy of a moment's consideration. Let us get back into the spirit of those traditions which have made the country what it is, as far as it is great and noble and influential for good.

What have we done for our Lord? Of the eighty-eight sufferers it was said that it was well borne by the elder Christians, but when the executioner came to the younger ones they were more timorous. Who wonders? Does the dear young life like to give itself out thus boldly, all at once, early in the morning? But not a heart fell back. Do not tell me that a kingdom thus begun and thus continued is going to fall. These men did not work through some delusion for which they could give no account; they accepted their fate intelligently, they gave reasons for it, they were not moved by mere delusions, but by arguments which to them were as intellectually complete as they were morally influential.

I would God we had more heroism in the Church. I ask you younger men and women to come forward and take the places of the elder, who are not cast into prison, but who may be disabled by age, who may be constrained by one uncontrollable circumstance or another to leave the front. They have had a long and useful day, and now they desire rest, and it is no coward's prayer they pray when they ask for relief if not release. Will you see the place left vacant? Are you content to see great gaps in the

ranks of the Church? Will you be baptized for the dead? Will you know that it is your turn next? There is a soldier in front of you dying: pluck up your courage in the divine strength, and be ready to take his place. When this spirit returns to the Church Herod will be troubled upon his throne, and the time is not far off when he will be consumed by the fire of the Lord.

Jesus began to preach, and he repeated John's sermon. The sermon is one. He said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Why, who preached that sermon before? John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ, seeing that John was in prison, saw that the sermon should not fail of utterance, and with another voice, that had in it wondrous possibility of intonation and colour, he said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He *began* to preach. Have we begun to hear? Hearing is an art, listening is not possible except to the attentive soul. Who listens well? Few men. What happens to him who listens well? He hears the Spirit's music!

NOTES.

"Between the 11th and 12th verses there is a great break, and it is well to remember what passed in the interval: (1) the return to the Baptist, and the call of the six disciples (John i. 29-51); (2) the marriage at Cana and the visit to Capernaum (John ii. 1-12); (3) the cleansing of the Temple; the interview with Nicodemus and the last testimony of the Baptist (John ii. 13 to iii. 36). At this stage comes in the imprisonment of John (mentioned here, but not narrated till xiv. 3-5), and the consequent journey through Samaria to Galilee (John iv. 1-42).

Spoken by the prophet.—We should say *written* by the prophet. But to the Jews of our Lord's time books were few, the people *heard* the words rather than *read* them; hence the peculiar form "SPOKEN by the prophet."

Verse 17.—"Began to preach," *i.e.*, began his *Galilean* ministry. Before this there had been a Judean ministry extending over several months.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, if thou dost answer us out of thy mercy, who then can tell the measure of thy reply to our prayer and our thanksgivings? Behold, thy love is a sea whose depths have never been searched, and thy mercy is higher than the sky, yea, no man can lay a line upon all the pity and compassion of God. Our life stands in thy goodness, we are surrounded by thy mercy, verily we live and move and have our being in God. Show us that thou art not a God far off but a God nigh at hand, yea, within us, nearer than our own breath and our own life, without whom, indeed, we could not live. We bless thee for the house of prayer, the place of silence and of song, the house of inspiration, the sanctuary of defence, the place where prayer is wont to be made, and we bless thee for the wide and open way to thy throne through Jesus Christ our only Saviour. We keep that living way, we are all found in it this very moment, so is the moment the sweetest in our life, and there is in it a brightness above the light of the sun, and it is alive with the most sacred and elevating hope.

Thou dost not disappoint the heart of man ; when his soul is lifted up towards thee thou dost bathe it with all the light of heaven's morning, and when his cry rises from his heart to thy throne, thou dost turn it into a sweet hymn, and enrich the heart with all the graciousness of thy love. We have come to thine house to-day with no small expectancy, our hearts are inflamed into a great desire, our tongue is open before thee with speech, demanding in the name of Christ, and not our own, all the promises to be fulfilled ; yea, is ours a violence—we come to take the kingdom of heaven by force. So hast thou allowed us to do, yea, thou hast charged us to seize the gates of thy kingdom and to open them with the violence of importunate love. We bless thee for there heavenly desires, we thank thee for influences that move the heart upwards from the dust and through the stars, and onward to things divine and everlasting. May those noble desires never die, may our life be a continual petition for enlargement and sanctification. We have been content too long to live in the dust and eat its perishing roots ; we would now live in the heavens, and sustain our hearts on God.

We bless thee for all thy Bible of love, wide as the heavens and green as the earth in summer-time, and tender as all the songs of love. We bless thee for that inner revelation of the spirit, that sacred ministry which is beyond all words, and too holy for song. O dwell within us, abide with us, soothe us with all the comforting, stimulate us with all the hopefulness which thou dost bring to bear upon the lives of men who are given to thee wholly, body, soul, and spirit. Turn the discipline of thy rod to the advantage of our souls, save us amid the gathering gloom from the last darkness of despair ; when every earthly

prop and hope is given up, do thou grant unto us the defences and assurances of thy sanctuary and thy presence.

Thou knowest us altogether ; the old and the young, the rich and the poor are here, the head hoary with the snows and frosts of many a winter, and the face bright and unwrinkled and young, and the life full of charming hope. Thou knowest those who are in bitterness and sorrow of soul, thou understandest all our life ; we therefore come before thee assured that in Christ Jesus all our wants shall be supplied and our poverty shall become the occasion of our wealth.

The Lord help us to do every good work with earnestness, the Lord work in us a holy dislike and detestation of all evil things, and the Lord grant unto us such answers in the course of his providence to our best desires and holiest vows as shall assure us that the voice of the heart does not fall to the ground.

We would read thy word attentively. we would listen to every tone of thy revelation, as if our soul's best interests depended upon hearing it. Whilst thus we attend thou wilt not withhold the illuminating and confirming spirit, but thou wilt pour out upon us all that we need as zealous and adoring students of thy holy book.

Bless us altogether, those of us who are old friends and old fellow-students of thy word, well known to one another as common suppliants at thy throne, and bless the stranger within our gates, who joins our worship to-day for the first and only time ; destroy all feeling of distance and strangeness and exile, and fill his soul with all the light and love of heaven, and thus in the unity of the spirit, with common and undistracted fellowship, may we wait upon God to our soul's profiting.

The Lord speak to the indifferent man and awake him to attention, the Lord rebuke the worldly man whose heart is at this moment far away from thy house though his body is here, and the Lord grant great rich answers of peace and assurance, pardon and love, to those whose best desire is to know the Lord more fully, and to serve him with increasing earnestness and delight. Amen.

Matthew iv. 18-25.

18. And Jesus (a considerable time after the temptation), walking by the sea of Galilee (the lake of Gennesareth or Tiberias), saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea : for they were fishers.

19. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

20. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

21. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets ; and he called them.

22. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

23. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues,* and

* " Divine service was held in the synagogue on the Sabbath, and also on the second and fifth day of each week. The service consisted in reading the law and the prophets by those who were called upon by the angel of the church, and

preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

24. And his fame went throughout all Syria (the province of which Palestine was considered a part), and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils (demons), and those which were lunatic (affected by the moon), and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

25. And there followed him great multitudes (plural, on account of the places whence they came) of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis (a group of ten cities), and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.

THE CALLING OF MEN.

WE are not to understand that this event took place immediately after our Lord's temptation. A very considerable interval passed between the temptation and this work by the sea of Galilee. Still the incident comes with infinite beauty and suggestiveness after that great crisis in the history of our Lord. Shall we be too fanciful if we think of the places in connection with the events—the quiet river and the sacred baptism; the solitary wilderness and the fierce assault of hell's chief; the busy sea and the call to service? If a painter seeks a background, and if the novelist feels it needful roughly and with the haste of great skill to thrust in a little scenery and landscape in order to throw up the figures, why should we hesitate to connect certain great events in our Lord's life and certain special events in our own life with the peculiar atmosphere in which they were developed—the river and the baptism, the wilderness, silent, solemn, awful, and its temptations, and the sea, never at rest, and its call to labour, heroic sacrifice, noble toil?

We are not to understand that these men never saw Jesus Christ until the day referred to in the text. They knew him perfectly well. Jesus Christ had been preaching and labouring in many places, and these very men sustained the relation of a kind of nominal discipleship to him already. There was in them a

in prayers offered up by the minister for the people, the people responding 'Amen.' The synagogues were not churches alone. They were also courts of law, in which sentences were both pronounced and executed—'they shall scourge you in their synagogues.' The synagogues were also public schools, and, lastly, the synagogues were the divinity schools or theological colleges of the Jews." See the *Cambridge Bible for Schools*. In Jerusalem alone there were more than 450 synagogues.

wonder, nearly equal to faith, there was in them an expectation which sometimes almost dignified itself into a religion. They knew his person, they knew his voice, they knew somewhat of his claim, and they had seen somewhat of his power. They were already in a sense followers of Christ just as some of you are, in a distant way, gropingly, wonderingly, well inclined towards him, with a mind half set in all the loftiness of the direction which he himself took. They would have been wounded if you had told them they did not care for him, and yet they would have been puzzled if you had asked them why. Why this is just your case ; if you could be suddenly and rudely told that you did not care for Christ, you would resent the impeachment. Yet you are not in the circle wholly and for ever. The time now came when Jesus Christ called these men with a more definite call to service. This was not a call to piety, to religious devotion, in the sense of mere worship. Understand that this was a call to toil, service, work. "I will make you fishers of men." He was not reasoning with the persons referred to, saying, "Give your hearts to God, be good in the truly religious sense of the word, leave your atheism and worship the true and living God ;" it was not an appeal of this kind that was addressed to the fishermen, it was a call to *service*—"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

There is a time in every life when such a call is addressed to it—a ghostly hour in which you heard a voice and could not tell whence it came. You said you were moved, stirred, all but inspired, and you knew not what to make of that strange incident in your life. Did it ever occur to you that it was the voice of *Christ* ? Did you ever give a broadly and sublimely religious interpretation to the ghostly ministries which have affected your thinking and toned your ambition ? If you have been looking downward for small interpretations that might be written with a fool's finger in the dry dust, let me now ask you to lift up your eyes and see if the meaning be not found in the stars rather than in the cold stones.

You do not deny the call, but how to carry it out is your difficulty. You have nothing to do with that. Hear this voice and tell me if everything be not in it—"Follow me." That may mean a great tax upon my strength. "Follow me." That may mean a

rash adventure. "Follow me." I may not be equal to the occasion. But the call does not *end* with "Follow me." He who spake these words spake other words which address themselves immediately to every misgiving of the modest heart. The other words are, "I will make you"—as if he had said, "Rely on me for the power, puzzle not yourselves with vain enquiries as to how this following is to be sustained and completed; he who gives the call gives the power." Herein we are entitled to bind Christ to his own promise. We do not start upon a warfare or a race at our own charges. We have come out at the bidding of God, to do God's work and to do it in God's strength—where, then, is your cleverness, your ingenuity, your self-supplying strength? You have none, you need none: your daily bread is in heaven; go for it every morning, live upon God, make yourself strong with his promises. I know not what I shall do for the next seven years; they will oppress me, they will kill me, they will utterly put an end to me—so would I talk if I were dependent upon my own suggestiveness and fertility of invention. But when Christ says, "I will make you—" he never leaves unfinished any tower that he begins. He has not left any star unrounded, there is no useless rubbish in his universe. I will then even live in him, and wait for his word, and when I am most dumb because of my self-exhaustion, he will be most eloquent if my eyes be lifted up to him in the prayerfulness of a confident expectation.

So many of you are standing back because you think you have to do everything at your own charges. You are afraid you would fail if you went forward to attempt this or that work in the name of Christ. Let me tell you the secret of your fear—you have not read the call right through from beginning to end. You have heard the words "Follow me"—the most of us only hear parts of sentences; there are very few men that can quote any sentence right through from beginning to end. They hear the leading word, they forget all the other words that give it perspective and tone and colour. Men hear according to their moral condition; we often hear only what we want to hear; our attention is not of that round and complete kind that takes in the entire statement and weighs it to the utmost syllable and tone.

How are we to know when a divine call has really been addressed to the heart? There are many calls that may only

be voices that we should not listen to—how then are we to know when the call does really come down from heaven, ringing with all its music and filled with all its gentle persuasiveness? The text will tell you—the answer is here. Know that your call to service is likely to be a divine vocation if it involve—sacrifice. You want to know no more. “Leave your ship, leave your father, leave your nets, leave your friends and follow me.” A call that summons men to surrender all things in this way is likely to be a healthy and true call.

I never knew God address any call to any human soul that did not involve loss. Anticipating our natural and eager desire to know whether a call is heavenly or earthly, God has always associated with his calls—*sacrifice*. When Moses was called, he counted it greater honour to follow God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season and to enrich himself with all the riches of Egypt. When Hadad astounded Pharaoh by saying he wanted to go back to Edom, Pharaoh said, “What hast thou lacked?” and the young man said, “Nothing, howbeit in any wise let me go.” The Lord had stirred up the heart of Hadad, and Hadad went from Egypt to poor Edom, from rest to battle, from assured and continued prosperity to all the perils and adventures of hazardous war.

This man Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, left their nets and followed Christ. Have we ever left anything for the Saviour? I have left nothing. He has given me more than I ever gave him—the whole advantage is on my side. If ever he should say to me, “I was sick and in prison, and ye came unto me,” I will contradict him to his face. He will have to prove it. There are those of us, perhaps, who think we have given up a good deal for the gospel; I am not of that number—I have given up nothing for the gospel. There have been men who have not counted their lives dear unto them that they might follow and serve Christ. It would be my distress not to follow him. There would be no poorer wretch on all the earth’s green surface than I should be were he to dismiss me from his service. I have never been bruised for him. I have had gardens of flowers given to me because I have endeavoured to preach him, and all times of comfortableness and honour: if ever he should say to me, “Blessed one, because I was an hungered and thou didst give

me bread," if I have not strength to contradict him, I hope I shall have the honesty to hang my head and deny by silence what I would gladly contradict by speech. Let none of us set up as sacrificing anything for Christ—we have never done it.

We observe further, from this incident, that Christ's calls are always to something higher. "I will make you fishers of men." He gives the broadest interpretation to our daily want. Whatever you are, he spiritually uses as a type of the other service to which he calls you. Are you fishers in the ordinary sense of the term? He comes to you and says, "I will make you fishers of men." Are you builders of stone and wood? He says, "I will make you builders of a living temple." Are you servants of masters who pay you? He says, "I will make you servants of the King of kings." If we have not realized the spiritual side of our earthly vocation, we are still in the outer court, and have much to learn. Oh, ye who heal the body, come, and Christ will show you how to heal the soul. Oh, ye tradesmen, and merchants, and money-turners, come and he will show you how to make fine gold and imperishable wealth. Accept your present secular position as a type and hint of the call which Christ is addressing to the soul.

So Christ Jesus called men to his ministry, and unless a man is called to his ministry he had better not enter it. I hold that no man is a true minister who is not directly called by Christ. This limits the ministry, but it strengthens it indefinitely. You cannot learn to preach, you cannot learn to expound the spiritual word—all your vocables may be neatly enunciated, you may learn the art of breathing and the art of delivering the voice, but you have not learned on earth, for it is not taught in the schools of men, how to touch the sin-cursed and sin-burdened soul; that art is taught in heaven: there is but one Master, and he never tires.

What is true of the spiritual ministry is true of all the ministries of life. Whatever you are, you will succeed in it only in proportion as Christ has called you to it. Some of you are in wrong positions altogether, you ought never to have begun where you did begin. By providences, over which you had no control, you were turned into wrong lines, and you know it, and your life is a daily pain and a continual sacrifice. After fifty years of age you cannot shift over to the right lines. Make the best of your position. You

are like men who are working against the tide, and it is hard work rowing, but inasmuch as you did not enter upon that arduous undertaking of your own conceit or self-will, inasmuch as others are to blame for it more than you are, I now give you good heart, I now cheer you in the name of the merciful One—he knows your distresses and disadvantages, and he will not overlook these when he audits the account of your life.

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria, and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy,”—what a world he came into! And he knew it before he entered it. If the world had been less damned he need not have come. In these verses you have a picture of the real state of humanity as Jesus Christ found it. I want to go where the people are all well. Tell me where the lepers are, where divers diseases and torments dwell, and where those live who are possessed with devils, and those which are lunatic, and those which have the palsy, and I will flee away. What are terrors to me were attractions to the infinite Heart.

This is the real condition of the world in every age—it is a world full of sickness, and disease, and torment, a world in which men are who are possessed with demons, who are moon-struck, and shivering and trembling with humanly incurable palsy. Do we want men of culture to go into such a world—nice, dainty-fingered men who faint at the sight of blood, and shudder if they see a paralytic on the streets? Is that the cruel irony we are going to perpetrate in such a world as this? Let us send down a hundred and fifty nice kid-gloved young men, who never speak above their breath, and who are infinitely gifted in the art of saying nothing in many words. They will return, they will sigh for summer days, and calmer climes, and fairer sights. Alas! “We are adapted to certain classes of people of a more elevated, dignified, and cultured kind.” Fie on thee, my soul, if thou art cursed with a conceit like that. The world is a sick world, a dying world, a mad world, and thy little daintinesses, and pretti-

nesses, and machine-turned sentences will never touch it. The world wants blood; no other price will redeem it. Oh, church of the living God, Zion, Jerusalem, called by a thousand tender names, what art thou doing but running away to pick up flowers when thou shouldst be labouring with coat off, with both hands earnestly at the deliverance and the healing of souls.

If you do not buy the world with blood you will never buy it. There be those who object to the expression, The blood of Christ. We have now refined that very much into the Love of Christ, the Example of Christ, the Sweet Influence of Christ. We are now unwilling to say, The blood of Christ. Why? We have never got anything worth having unless we paid *blood* for it. How were the slaves redeemed and emancipated? What was laid down on the counter? *Blood*. Have you your Magna Charta, and do you boast of that large paper? What paid you for it? *Blood*. Show me in all English history a single great treasure you have, and I will show you as the signature of its lawful purchase—red blood, heart blood, human blood. Yet when I come into a church and think of redeemed men, I am told not to mention the word blood, but to substitute for it example, love, sympathy, kindness. No, no. The music is one, the anthem is indivisible, redemption is always by blood, and he who has paid less than blood for any redemption has bought it at the wrong counter and paid for it with counterfeit coin.

Imagine a man coming into such a world as is described in the twenty-third and twenty-fourth verses to do anything for it merely by way of *example*. It is by tragedy that we live. Your home life owes all its beauty and dignity to the tragedy which is at the heart of it. If we are ever to impress this age we must do it by something more than dainty words and accurately regulated ecclesiastical mechanism. When we go nearer the city we must weep over it, and when we go into the city we must die for it. Other programmes you may write, but the angels will tear them and scatter them as waste paper upon the mocking winds.

Wondrous is one little word in this twenty-fourth verse. "He healed them,"—as easily as the light fills the firmament, without struggle or noise or huge effort. Mark the infinite ease of the expression, "He healed them." Set that expression beside "He created them, he set them in their places, he rolled the stars along

—he healed them.” It is part of the same music, omnipotence never fluttered on account of weakness, and never despaired because of miscalculation. What is thy complaint, O heart of man? He will heal thee. Do not go in the detail of complaints, there is but one disease and its short name is—Sin. All diseases are but details of that awful fact. The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth from all sin. There is a fountain opened in the house of David for sin. The details are innumerable, the central and vital disease is one.

Jesus Christ’s ministry was thus twofold. It was not a literary ministry, it was a philanthropic ministry in the noblest interpretation of that term, a man-loving ministry, a ministry that loved the body and that loved the soul. What are we doing for the body? I know there are great dangers in doing for the body, lest people should become hypocrites. Better make a few hypocrites than miss the chance of doing good to one really deserving soul. But who am I that I should set up as scrutineer into real deserts? What are my own deserts? None. Shall we pass up to the judgment bar in the official character of scrutineers and say to the great King-Judge, “Lord, I played the part of scrutineer, I examined the credentials of other people, I plucked the mask from the hypocrite’s face, I stood nigh to see that no undeserving ones got a crumb from the loaf of charity: what am I to have as a scrutineer?” There are too many scrutineers. I was the other night accosted, walking with my wife, by a poor creature who said, “I am very faint, sir.” It well became me to play the scrutineer and to say, “All due to her evil behaviour.” How dare I say so? Her evil behaviour? If she was faint it was my business to help her to overcome that faintness. I would rather be taken in, deceived, in response to such a petition, than go home and sit down over a smoking feast and applaud myself as a sagacious scrutineer.

PRAVER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we thank thee that we have not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto darkness and tempest and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, a sight so terrible that Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake;" but we have come to Mount Zion, the city of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the place made sacred by the presence of our Saviour. We are now about to sit at his feet, that from his gracious lips we may hear the new and larger law. We bless thee that he, too, went up into a mountain, and that his voice was low, tender, gentle, because of our weakness; yea, falling in tender whispers upon the agony of our conscious guilt, and shedding upon us not a lightning to dazzle, but a gentle summer morning, quiet as light and almighty as love.

We bless thee for the enthroned Christ, seated upon the mountain, teaching, lifted up upon the Cross, dying in atoning sacrifice, exalted far above all principalities and powers and names and dominions and ministries at the right hand of God, ruling all things, giving centre and vitality and hope to the great universe. We gather around him this day, with loyal hearts and true, with undivided love, with thankfulness loud and sweet in its utterance, and to him we give the unbroken psalm of adoration and gratitude. O, that we might this day pass away from the earth in all our higher feelings and seize the promised joys, the inmost love, the divine love. Liberate us from the enthrallment of time and sense and all things measurable, and give us liberty in heaven to enjoy, by exquisite foretaste, all the banquet thou hast provided for our eternal nourishment. We bless thee for this stairway up to heaven, this lower sanctuary, this outer porch and court of the great temple. Whilst we are here may we learn much of thy law, and study to the enlightenment of our mind and the comforting of our heart such of thy doctrines and thy promises as our life most needs to know.

We come with the week's hymn of love; for all the six days gone thou hast been with us—the brightness of our morning, the star of our night. Thou hast protected our roof, and our door and our windows; thou hast made our bed, and enkindled our fire and spread our table; and thy rod is an unbroken staff in our hand. Behold us, then, grateful; full of high desire to bless and praise thee, and worthily magnify thy name. Let our weakness become strength, let our infirmity add pathos to the sacrifice which is thereby made incomplete; may our very sin endear thee to us by reason of our contrition and repentance. The old man and the young man, the mother and the child, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, are all here for one sacred purpose, with hearts beating steadily to one offering of ardent love. Surely when thou passest through the heavens and lookest down upon the earth, thou

wilt not forget the places where thy people meet to pray. Send a special blessing upon every congregated host assembled to sing thy praise and wait upon thy footstool, and give us this day a baptism gentle as dew, ardent as fire, bright as light, and let us henceforward be thine by a deeper consecration.

Hear the voice of those who to-day are uttering good words for the future. They would live better than ever, they would begin anew, they would sin no more; their hearts are in high mood of expectation; they hate the past wherein it was guilty, and they would give thee the future unstained by sin. Hear their vow, and whilst they utter it in all sincerity, minister unto them the grace which will enable them to fulfil it. The Lord knows how impossible it is for us whilst on earth to be in heaven, yet thou wilt count our holy purposes as holy deeds, and what we would be we shall be in the writing of thy book.

The Lord direct us in all business engagements, in all commercial perplexities, in all honest endeavours to make a livelihood in the sight of society. Prosper our schemes and plans wherein they are inspired by thine own Spirit, and give unto us the prosperity which will itself be sanctified as a gift from heaven, and spare us those humiliations which would drive us into hopelessness and despair. May we give our strength to thee, nor withhold our weakness from thine altar. May our whole life be given to thee, an entire gift, un begrudged, yielded with the whole love of the heart, because of what thou hast done for us.

The Lord be kind unto all for whom we ought to pray—to the old man our father at home, to the sick send messages of consolation, to the poor speak such words as their poverty can understand, to the baffled and afflicted, the bewildered and the panic-stricken thou knowest what to say, for we are dumb. To the soldier and the sailor, and the stranger far from home, and the prodigal, the unthankful and the evil, the murderer of father and of mother by daily and aggravated sin—send messages from thy house in heaven, thou gentle Father, thou almost Mother. The Lord be kind unto us this day, and set a flame in his house that shall give us illumination not of earth, and grant unto us revelations of truth which will make us glad with holy and grateful surprise. Amen.

Matthew v. 1-12.

1. And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

2. And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

3. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

5. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

7. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

8. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

9. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

10. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for great is your reward in heaven : for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

“**A**ND seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain.” He has already been in the river, and walking by the seaside : to-day he goes up into a mountain, and presently we shall have to accompany him in his journeys through cities and towns and villages. Thus, little by little, a place at a time, he will claim and sanctify the whole earth. He was baptized in the river, walking by the seaside he called men to service : this morning he walks up the hill as up a stairway his own hands have fashioned ; presently he will go further and spread his own gospel typically over all the face of the earth. Thus he will do in symbol what he will tell us to do literally, for what other places are there upon the whole globe besides the river, the sea, the mountain, the city, the town, the village, the house ? Thus the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed. In the doing and work of our own Saviour he will give us the germ of the missionary idea ; we shall see the people of one town getting round him and saying, “ Don’t leave us,” and he will rise above them and say, “ I must preach the gospel in other cities also.” Thus, when he comes to wind all up, in the most beneficent climax that ever crowned the eloquence of a lifetime, he will only tell us to expand what he himself began.

He went up into a mountain, into a pulpit not made with hands. I like these weird beginnings. He did not go in conventional methods : we wait till the church is built : he said the church was not made with hands : wherever there is a sky there is a roof, wherever there is a floor there is a platform, wherever there is a man there is a congregation, wherever there is a human heart there is an opportunity of preaching the kingdom of heaven.

“ And when he was set.” Did the carpenter’s son do what the Rabbis did ? They gathered their robes about them when they sat down in Moses’ seat, for the Jewish Rabbi always sat whilst he talked. It was even so that Jesus did on a larger and grander scale. He begins royally : there is a subtle claim of dominion in this very attitude of his ; he does not beg to be heard ; he does not say, “ If you please, I shall be glad to mention to you

a suggestion or two which have been stirring in mine own heart." He sits, and the mountain gives him hospitality. He fills the mountain, it befits him like a king's throne. Close your eyes and open the vision of your hearts, and look at him. We go into small buildings, we ask permission to speak in limited synagogues; why, in the motion of his limbs there is a subtle, strange royalty of mien. When he sits he sits as one who has a right to the mountain, and when he speaks it is as one whose gentle voice fills the spaces like a healing breeze.

"He opened his mouth." The ages had been waiting for the opening of those lips. When some great men amongst us and all over the world open their lips in high places they seem to have the power of making history. Other nations are listening, wondering, hoping, fearing; when this man opened his mouth he uttered words which would fill creation, which would be a gospel set in every language ever spoken by mankind, and easily set in every language. There are tongues into which you cannot drive Milton. Shakespeare must, in many of his utterances, be a stranger for ever to those who have but one tongue, and that not rich in its capacity of utterance. But the words of Jesus Christ go everywhere, and fall into all languages with infinite ease. He speaks of light, love, life, truth, peace, God, home. There cannot be a language without these words having some distinct share in it. He sits down upon every mountain and breathes through every language his most ineffable gospel.

"He taught them." This is a new word; we have not met with this word before in our reading. When we listened to Jesus Christ before, he was preaching, now he is teaching. The preacher was a herald, a crying voice: "Repent," said he. The air was startled by the cry. Now he changes the tone: he sits down and teaches, explains, simplifies, draws the listeners into confidence and sympathy with himself, and makes them co-partners of the infinite secret of the divine truth and love.

Do we run after preachers or teachers? Unquestionably after preachers. The teachers of London to-day are talking to half-dozens, the preachers are thronged. Who cares to be taught? How many of us bring our Bible to church and follow the preacher page by page, checking every reference, testing every doctrine, asking for explanations by eager eyes and burning

faces? By the trick of an anecdote I will engage to seduce from the wisest teacher in London nine-tenths of his hearers. We are in the anecdotal age: some child's story would tickle us, while the philosopher's doctrine would muddle the heads that are nearly lunatic because of the mean and vulgar noises of a mean and vulgar world.

"Saying, Blessed." That is a new word also. I have not met that word aforetime. What was it that he said when we first heard him? "Repent." And now he says "Blessed." There is a high logic in this sequence. Preaching first, then teaching. Repentance first, then inspiration—these are the coherences and minute consistencies, the moral unities which you find all through and through this Christian revelation, which make it not a chaos but a living world with a living centre.

In this verse I find two classes referred to—multitudes and disciples. Are they not co-ordinate terms? Far from it. How well it would have read, how noble would have been the music, complete as a sphere, had it said—"When he beheld the multitudes he hailed them as disciples and taught them." Already there begins the division—that terrible distinction which separates man from man, the hearer from the scholar, the onlooker from the inlooker, the particle of a mob from the particle of a family. To which class do we belong? Are we part of the anonymous multitudes, or part of the registered household? We may all be disciples; why should we not be scholars of the one Teacher? Come, let him lure thee—give up all other teachers and hear this teacher sent from God. Lord, open mine ears that I may hear the whole music of thy heaven-unfolding voice.

This discourse was not delivered to the multitudes, it was delivered to the disciples. Some preparation is needed for hearing Christ. Presently he will stand right out in the busy market-place and speak common words to the common heart, but on this mountain he is speaking to a few chosen ones who have a measure, very inadequate, of understanding and appreciation. Why, it requires a little preparation to go into a picture-gallery; how much more to go into a church? When the uninstructed visitor goes into a picture-gallery, he is seized by subjects, not by art. A pleasing face, a sweet child, a loving home, some little pathetic incident touches him. An idealized tree, a landscape

made into poetry, he would not see : he does not look for art, he looks for subjects. You require some little preparation for going into a music-hall ; how much more for going into God's sanctuary ? What pieces are applauded ? Listen. Pieces that are subjects again, that mingle easily with the unthinking—the sparkling, the rattling, or the pathetic : pieces that require to be read with the inner eye are lost upon the uninitiated, and it is certain to me, therefore, and it is no wonder, that some preparation should be needed for listening to Jesus Christ.

His very first sentence is a secret which can have no meaning to the vast majority of hearers. What is that first sentence ? “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” What said the preacher you heard this morning ? Nothing. Quote me one sentence that he uttered. He began by saying, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Commonplace talk like that ; sparkle, brilliance, there was none ; he is not worth listening to ; he seemed rather weak in his way of speaking, his voice was low, and yet well heard ; I expected another kind of voice altogether, and another type of subject, and he began, after all this weary waiting of the listening ages, by saying, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” He began by healing broken hearts, he began by comforting those that we want to write off the register, for we are sick of puling and whining and groaning and sighing. He stooped to pick up a broken reed when we thought he would have mounted the stars and passed before us with the wondrous velocity and splendour of the lightning.

The heart needs some preparation to know the meaning of this expression, “the poor in spirit.” The expression sounds as if it were simple, and so it is, but it is the simplicity which is a last result. We may have to spend a weary and baffled lifetime before we come into the mystery of this eloquence, “the poor in spirit.”

I propose to look at the beatitudes as a whole, and not just now to look at them in detail. The time may come when we shall be able to look at each verse as a single gem ; meanwhile my inquiry is, “What was Christ's idea of a blessed life ? ”

In Christ's idea of a blessed life I find a marvellous union of the divine and the human. Some of the beatitudes look up right away into heaven, others of them look down into all the relations

of earth and time. In other words, some of the beatitudes are intensely theological, and others are intensely moral and social. Thus in the beatitudes we have a complete representation of the religion which Jesus Christ came to establish and expound, a religion combining the theological with the moral, the doctrinal with the practical, the God and the neighbour: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.

What is our religion? Theological only, or moral? Have we magnificent doctrine and do we pay our debts? Have we splendid intellectual conceptions of the metaphysical constitution of the universe, and do we forgive our enemies? Are we orthodox in all spiritual conception, and do we feed the hungry and clothe the naked? In Christ's religion earth and heaven go together, and there is not a flower that blooms on the green earth that does not owe its beauty to the sun.

In Christ's conception of the blessed life I find many persons mentioned that I did not expect to find referred to, and I find many persons omitted that I expected would have been first spoken of. Let me take the beatitudes as a picture of heaven. Who is in heaven? Blessed are the mighty, for they are in heaven; blessed are the rich, for theirs is the kingdom of glory; blessed are the famous, for theirs are the trumpets of eternity; blessed are the noble, for the angels are their servants. Why, that is not the text. Who is in heaven? The poor in spirit, they that mourn, the meek, they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers. Then, then, perhaps we may be there. Not many mighty, not many noble, not many learned, not many brilliant are called. Then perhaps we may be there. Woman, mother, sister, obscure person, unknown life—you may be there. Who cares to seek such flowers as these? Give me the flowers that flame like fires, and I will call these a worthy garland. Who cares to turn their heads to look back to seek such modest beauty? God does. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

In Christ's conception of the blessed life I find that goodness and reward always go together. Goodness is indeed its own reward. The flower brings its own odour, the light brings its own revelations. The goodness *is* the reward, the prayer *is* the answer. There are persons who say, "You have prayed the prayer, have

you got the reply?" Certainly, while we are yet speaking. You do not understand this mystery, you thought there would be a telegram or a man with a four-square letter at your door, saying, "Here is the answer." Whatsoever things ye pray for, believe that ye have them, and have them you certainly will. This blessedness, therefore, comes with the condition specified. The poor in spirit has the kingdom of heaven already, has it of divine gift and divine right. Sometimes we enter into this high experience right fully, we know what it means without any preacher telling us in so many words. There are times when the heart is just alive with heaven. There are seasons when we could despise rather than give up the high rapture or the sweet tenderness of soul which ennobles us. You have been in those occasional moods, and, therefore, I need not further explain or refer to them. If you have not been caught up into that third heaven, I might speak until the night turn into the morning, and you would not catch a tone of this sacred truth.

In Christ's conception of the blessed life I find that even the *enemy* himself is made a contributor. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Why, he shows us how flowers grow in the night-time, how the wilderness may rejoice and blossom as the rose, how the black devil with sharp teeth and eyes of fire is the servant of the good man, and waits upon him and ministers to his joy. O that we might enter into this meaning, then all things would be ours, life, death, height, depth—our servants would be a multitude, and in that multitude would be found the angels of God.

Now into which verse can I come? Let each man ask for himself. I am not all these eight—which is my little wicket-gate, through which I pass into God's reward? Let me see what choice of gates there is—the poor in spirit, they that mourn, the meek, they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted. Let each scholar ask, "Which is my gate?" There is only one gate that I see here that I ever have any hope of getting in at. I think, perhaps,

through that gate I might go. "Blessed are they that hunger." If I cannot get through that gate, I fear all the others are shut.

But there is a gate for all of us—which is yours, my brother? Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you, for he that seeketh findeth, and to every one that knocketh it shall be opened. And yet methinks that all the gates somehow interfold, and that if we get through one we shall seem to have gone through all. This is a mystery known only to the heart of the elect.

Concerning these beatitudes two things may be said: first, they can be *tested*. These are not metaphysical abstractions that no man can lay his hand upon, these are practical truths that every man can test for himself. And the next thing that can be said about them is that the blessings here promised are *already in possession*. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven." We do not wait for immortality, we begin it now. We shall not perhaps be the sons of God in ages yet unborn and untold, *we are* the sons of God. We are not to be in heaven a long time after, we are now in heaven—with limitations, but with a deep assurance the world can never shake. Not yet completed, there is infinitely more to come and to shine upon us, but whilst we pray we enter heaven by prayer. Whilst we love, we enter heaven by love. When we forgive, we are in heaven.

NOTES.

Verse 3.—"Pauper Dei in animo est, non in Sacculo."—*Augustine. The meek.*—"The one staff of Moses breaks in pieces the ten thousand spears of Pharaoh."—*Eastern Proverb.* "Vis possidere terram? Vide ne possidearis a terri." Dost thou wish to possess the earth? beware then lest thou be possessed by it.

Verse 6.—"Very beautifully Augustine draws from John vi. 26-65 a commentary on this text, making 'righteousness' here equivalent with 'bread from heaven' there, and urging that in both passages we should understand nothing short of Christ Himself."—*Trench.*

Verse 8.—"The pure in heart"—the single heart, the heart without folds. "The purged eye of the soul."

"Augustine contemplating this heptad of beatitudes no longer singly, but as a whole, suggests more than once that perhaps they may stand in some relation to the sevenfold operations of the Holy Spirit whereof Isaiah (ch. xi.) speaks."

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thy way concerning us we do not understand : it is enough for us to know that it is thy way. Help us to walk in it step by step, with all patience and hopefulness, knowing that thou wilt bring us at last into a large and quiet place. Thou dost astonish the upright and turn the innocent pale by thy judgment and mysteries, so that we cannot tell what thou doest in the heavens or upon the earth, and when men question us about thee there is no reply upon our lips : we can but say, This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. He setteth the mighty upon their heads, and turneth their mansions upside down ; yea, he changeth the channels of the sea and turneth the rivers into a wilderness ; he taketh up the isles as a very little thing, and from his seat upon the circle of the earth the populations are as grasshoppers. This is the Lord's rule ; yea it is our Father's reign and sovereignty, and we rest in that, and find ourselves at peace.

We are of yesterday, and know nothing ; we close our eyelids and behold we are blind in a moment, we cannot stretch beyond the length of our arms, we are barred and caged in like lives that are watched ; to-morrow we die, and the third day are we forgotten as if we had never been. It well becometh us, therefore, to hold our peace, to look on in silence and with religious wonder, and to wait hopefully for the grand last revelation. Make of us what thou wilt. We would be busier, but that comes from our impatience ; we would be more famous and influential, but that is the mischief of our ambition ; so we will withdraw wholly our own counsel and purpose, and we will wait as slaves wait upon their masters, asking thee to give us the liberty of thine own love, and to bind us fast with the loyalty of a love created in our hearts by thyself.

The days flee away ere we can count them one by one ; they cease to be days, they are like flashes in the darkness and are gone instantly. O that we might number them as best we may, with some view of finding the way in wisdom, and making the reckoning as becometh men of understanding. Help us to know the measure of our life, how little it is, a child's tiny span, and our time is as a flying shuttle, as a post hastening on its way, as a shadow that continueth not. So teach us, therefore, in our joys to remember how speedily they fall. May the young be wise as the aged, and the aged be as those who have attained the venerableness of great experience.

The Lord help us to do our work with both hands, with our whole head and heart, as if everything depended upon us, and then to leave it as if we did nothing at all. Feed us with thy grace, enrich and nourish us with thy most gracious word ; may thy doctrine distil as the dew, and thy gospel sing to us

as an angel, and charm us out of ourselves into thy great service. May thy promises become exhortations, and in the midst of thine exhortations may we hear the voice of benediction.

Let the Lord's pity be poured out upon us as from the very fountain of his heart, and may we know that our life is the object of thy compassion, that thou dost not revile us in the heavens or laugh at us in the distant skies ; but with all mercifulness and pitifulness of heart dost look upon us as those whose days are as a shadow fast fleeing away ; yea, thou hast set up for us the cross—the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, our one priest, our only Saviour, our infinite, our atoning sacrifice ; in him we see how great we are in thy purpose. Help us to behold his priesthood and to avail ourselves of his loving ministry ; in all our sin and sorrow, in all our daily vexation and passing trouble, may we enter into his heart as men enter into a sanctuary which cannot be violated.

The Lord hear the prayers we cannot speak, the uprisings and motionings of our dumb hearts ; multiply our few words into a great intercession, and let all our utterances be repronounced by our Priest in heaven.

The Lord send messages from his great house to the dwelling-places of those who are ailing, sick, dying, wearying to die, waiting for the angel, longing for some sound of the coming chariot wheels. The Lord send messages to those who are sitting in the gloom of despair, who say they have tried every key upon their girdle and none will fit, who sit down beside barred gates and walls too high to be scaled. The Lord speak his own comforting word to hearts to whom the darkness is a burden, and to whom the night has no star. Preserver of the strangers, take away the loneliness of the stranger's heart, give him to feel in thine house that he is at his Father's table and under his Father's blessing. And grant unto the widow and the orphan, the poor, the lonely, the comfortless, and them that have no helper, some message and assurance that shall recover their hearts' hope, and re-establish them in a wise confidence.

The Lord hold us all as if we belonged to him, and draw us nearer his heart the more the tempter assails. Amen.

Matthew v. 13-16.

13. Ye are the salt of the earth : but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted ? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

14. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

15. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick ; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT *(continued)*.

THERE are two ways of looking at this portion of the Lord's address. He is speaking to the disciples—that may be inferred from the first verse of the chapter, wherein it says, "When he was set, his disciples came unto him, and he opened his mouth

and taught them." Are we to suppose that these disciples referred to were the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and a city set upon a high hill? Surely not in their merely personal capacity, and in their then condition. Let us take the first view, therefore; namely, that Jesus Christ is speaking of the Jews, and speaking of them he hesitates not to describe them as the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the city set upon a hill. And yet in a very gentle way, but so broad as to admit of no misapprehension, he intimates that the salt has lost its savour, the light has been put under a bushel, and the conspicuousness of the city has become but its greater shame. The effect of this teaching is to remind men of great calling and election, and of great and appalling declension, and to prepare the way for such remedial and reclaiming measures as were in the purpose and counsel of the Eternal. This was not dust that had become drier, it was not clay that had become harder, it was salt that had lost its savour, light that was in danger of being wholly extinguished. Jesus Christ, therefore, recognising the greatness and the grandeur of the call in which the Jews stood, proceeded in this most gracious and gentle manner to indicate the declension into which they had fallen. That is one view.

Take the other view. Jesus Christ sees in those disciples what his church is *to be*. Not addressing them in their then intellectual and spiritual condition, but looking forward as men look from the germ to the full fruition, he regarded them as the beginning of his own divine kingdom, and addressing them as such, he described them as the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and a city set upon a hill. Both views are, in my opinion, correct. There is enough in each of them to awaken the most solemn reflection, to affect the soul with all the pain of the bitterest humiliation, and to inspire it with all that is most animating in the sacred word. I will take the second view and set it with some breadth before you.

Christ sees the greatest side of our nature, and he addresses that side, because we are more easily and effectually moved by encouragement than by any other influence. Tell a man he is a fool and you cast him into despair. Tell him that he has lost every chance, spoiled every opportunity, neglected all the counsel of heaven and is no longer worthy of being counted a living creature in

God's universe, and possibly you may burden him with all the distress of absolute despair. The effect will be according to the nature of the particular man who is addressed. Jesus Christ never gave us a discouraging view of ourselves whenever he saw us set in any relation to himself, of earnest listening or religious expectation or incipient desire to be wiser and better men. When we stood before him in the full erectness of our own purity, and came before him with a certificate of our own integrity, and requested to be heard upon the basis of our righteousness, he turned upon us the fury of the east wind, and banished us from his presence as men to whom he had nothing to say. Whenever we grouped ourselves around him and said we would listen with reverence and with religious expectation to what he had to say, then he opened the kingdom of heaven, and not until our capacity was surcharged did he withdraw his gracious and redeeming revelations of truth.

This is the great law of human teaching. If you want your boy to be a gentleman, do not begin by treating him as an invincible and incurable boor. I wait until that lesson gets right down into your apprehension. If you want to encourage your scholars, begin by treating them as young philosophers. Give them credit for as much as you possibly can—by so doing you will cast them upon themselves in serious reflection, and with some anxiety they will endeavour to respond to the breadth, the sympathy, and the nobleness of your estimation of their capacity and diligence. If you want any man to do his best, trust him with considerable responsibility. Who could do his best if he knew he was watched, suspected, distrusted, and that the object of the vigilant criticism was to entrap him, to find out his defects, and to convince him by multitudinous arguments that he was wholly unfit for his position? Many of us could not work at all under such circumstances; we should simply succumb under their distressing weight if we did not resent them as intolerable humiliations.

Jesus Christ says, "Ye are the salt of the earth"—says to a man who thought himself useless in the world, "Thou art as pungent salt in the midst of a putrid age," or, "Thou art as salt cast upon that which is already good, to preserve it from decay." Jesus Christ adds, "Ye are the light of the world,"—tells a man who never suspected himself of having any light at all, that it is in him

to throw a circle of radiance around his family, his neighbourhood, or it may be his country. Let us learn to follow this example in some degree. We get from men in many cases just what we tell them we *expect* from them ; there is something in human nature that likes to be trusted with *responsibility*, something in us that responds to great occasions. Jesus Christ always supplied a grand occasion to his hearers, and he opened the broad and sunny road of hope. He did not point to the low and dank caverns of despair.

Jesus Christ recognises the true *influence of good men*. He called them salt which is pungent, light which is lustrous, a city set on a hill which is conspicuous, and may be seen afar by travellers and by those who long for home. Some influences are active—salt and light ; some influences passive—a city set on a hill. We must not judge one another's influence by our own, and condemn any man's influence in the Church because it does not take its tone and range from our own method of doing things. Some clocks do not strike. They have to be looked at if from them we would know the time of day. Some clocks do strike, and they strike in the darkness as well as in the light, and it is pleasant to the weary, sleepless one now and again to catch the tone which tells him that the darkness is going and the light is coming. Do not undervalue me because I am a man of but passive influence. Do not charge me with ambition and madness because I am a man of energetic influence. Let each be what the great, loving, wise Father meant him to be. There is room in his heart for all. The brain makes no noise ; the tongue no man can tame—is the tongue, therefore, not a divine creation ? Yea, verily, God taught it its trick of speech and its wizardry of music. Is the brain not of divine formation because it makes no noise ? Yea, verily, it is as the inmost church of the Lord wherein God shows the fullest of his heavenly and immortal splendour.

George Gilfillan, in his most energetic and inspiring book called “Bards of the Bible,” has some observations upon this matter of silence as contrasted with noise. As a boy I used to be very fond of that rhetorical writer, and as a man I do not renounce him. I have not seen the sentence for twenty years, but I think I can quote it even now in substance. He says, “The greatest objects in nature are the stillest : the ocean has a voice, the sun

is dumb in his courts of praise. The forests murmur, the constellations speak not. Aaron spoke; Moses' face but shone. Sweetly might the High Priest discourse, but the Urim and the Thummim, the blazing stones upon his breast, flash forth a meaning deeper and diviner far." Young men, store your memory with such words as these, and you will never want to run away from your own society. The chairs may be vacant, but the air will be full of angels.

Yet whatever our influence may be, we may *lose* it. The salt may lose its savour, the light may be put under a bushel, and a city set upon a hill may turn its lights out, or build its walls against the sun and turn its windows otherwhere. The foolish discussion has been sometimes raised as to whether salt could lose its pungency—raised by people who wanted to catch the Saviour tripping in his speech. But in proportion to the difficulty is the solemnity. He who made the salt knows more about it than we do, and whatever may become of the salt, taking the mere letter as the limit of our criticism, we all know as the saddest and most tragical fact in life that some of the grandest intellects have lost their glory, and some right hands always lifted in defence of the right have lost their cunning. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. What I say unto one I say unto all—watch.

Every man sheds a light *peculiar to himself*. No one man has all the light; no one star holds in its little cup all the glory of the universe. One star differeth from another star in glory. Suppose one of the least of the stars should say, "I am going to withdraw from the firmament because I see a great flame, compared with whose splendour I am but as a glowworm in the presence of the sun." Better for that little foolish star to say, "The God that made yonder great flame trims my lamp and gives me my little sparkle of light."

There is a right *way* of using influence. Observe how Jesus Christ puts the matter when he says, "Let your light *SO* shine before men;" the word *so* should be emphasized as indicating the manner of the shining. Light may be so held in the hand as to *dazzle* the observer; light may be brought too near the eyes, light may be set at the *wrong angle*, light may be wasted, its beams be displayed so as to be of no use to the man who would

read or work. Hence it is not enough to be luminous, but so to use our luminousness as to be of *use* to other people. There are men who, from my point of view, are luminous enough to light a whole country who do not light their own little house. There are men who need to be focalised, all but immeasurable men, with a kind of infinite capacity for anything, and who yet, for want of right setting and bringing together and focalizing, live as splendid nothings and die as bubbles die upon the troubled wave. It is not enough, therefore, for us to have light and to be luminous; we must study the great economic laws by which even a little light may sometimes go a long way, and a great light may throw its timely splendour upon the road of him who is in perplexity and doubt.

Our Saviour further teaches us that our light is so to shine that our good works may be seen. He does not say that the worker may be made visible, but that the works may be observed, admired, imitated, may induce men to give glory to the Father which is in heaven. It is thus that his own sun works daily in the heavens: who dares look at the sun when he so shines as to fill the earth with all the beauty of summer? We turn our eyes up to him, and he rebukes us with darts of fire; he says, "Look down, not up; look at the works, not the worker." So we may feast our eyes upon a paradise of flowers, and get much of heaven out of it, but the moment we venture to say, "Who did this—where is he?" "Show me the worker," the sun answers us with a rebuke of intolerable light. So no man hath seen God at any time, but we see his Son Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time, yet we count his stars when the great daylight is away; we wonder how they were hung upon nothing, and how they shine without wasting, and what they are—porch lamps of a King's palace, street lamps on a heavenly way—who can tell? None, yet the bare question-asking stirs the mind and the heart with a noble wonder that is almost religious. What wonder, then, if you cannot look at the sun, that you cannot look at the God that made the sun? If he is invisible in himself, he is not invisible in his ministry. We also are his offspring. In every little child I see his work, in the meanest human life I see the infinitude of his wisdom and the beneficence of his purpose. In myself I see the divinity of God.

Thus our lesson stands in the meantime. A kind word of encouragement has been spoken to us : we are not regarded as little, insignificant, contemptible, not worth gathering up : we are spoken of as salt, light, and a city set on a hill. Let us answer the grandeur of the challenge. We have been told that the best influence may decline and die : salt may lose its savour, the light may be extinguished. Let us hear the solemn exhortation, and exercise a spirit of vigilant caution. We have been called to a certain manner of life ; let us take heed unto the call, lest having magnificent powers we waste them as rain would be wasted upon the unanswering and barren sand.

NOTES.

Verse 13.—"They are not thus truly trodden under foot who suffer persecution without shrinking, but they who through fear of persecution become vile, abandoning their faith ; for undermost though he may *seem*, yet he is not really so, who, whatever he may be suffering below on earth, has his heart fixed above in heaven."

Lost its savour.—The Vulgate reads, "*Quod si sal evanuerit*," etc. Trench prefers *infatuerit*, as singularly happy ; *fatuus*, the man saltless, insipid. The French word is *fade*, for which there is no equivalent in English.

Salt.—Such as was found in the salt marshes of Palestine ; not what we should regard as pure salt.

Ye are the salt of the earth.—"The special use of salt being to preserve from corruption. Addressed primarily to the Apostles as teachers of the earth, it applies also to Christians in general, as living in a corrupt world, and having it as an especial duty to oppose and check the progress of corruption. The same may be said of the following expression, 'the light of the world,' applied to Christians in general by St. Paul (Phil. ii. 15)."

If the salt have lost his savour.—"It is a well-known fact that the salt of this country (gathered from the marshes in dry weather), when in contact with the ground or exposed to air and sun, does become insipid and useless."—THOMSON, *The Land and the Book*.

"This figure of the salt is given in a different connection (Mark ix. 50 ; Luke xiv. 34). There is nothing in a proverbial saying of this kind to make it improbable that it may have been repeated on various occasions, and we may regard both these as most likely distinct repetitions of similar language. The same may be said of verse 15, the substance of which is repeated in Mark iv. 21 ; Luke viii. 16, xi. 33 ; the two former, however, of these being manifestly different accounts of the same discourse."—*The Speaker's Commentary*.

Verse 16.—The word FATHER as applied to God occurs in this verse for the first time in the New Testament.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY God, surely thou dost put us into the fire to take out of us all that is bad, and to make us as good as thou art, according to our degree. Thou dost not delight to see our life in pain, thou hast no pleasure in death, and the darkness thou dost abhor. All thy purpose concerning us is love, therefore dost thou try us by many ways, that we may be brought into thy purity and love, and show forth thine infinite holiness. Thou dost smite the pride of our eyes and rob our right hand of its riches, and cause our right foot to tremble and to fall, that thou mayest do some good to our soul, awakening the attention of our love, and charming the trust of our heart that it may give itself wholly to thee and live in none beside. Give us this view of thy way amongst us, and then our fears shall no longer distress us, but upon our smitten life there shall shine a great light as of the very hope of heaven. Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but rather grievous; nevertheless afterwards it worketh the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. We have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin, and our strength has not been utterly crushed in the great warfare. Behold, thou hast purposes of mercy towards us in all these struggles, fears, contests, and subtle temptations. Thou art training us by a wondrous education, to be like thyself in all pureness and grace. Thou hast chastened us sore, but thou hast not left us utterly in the hands of the tormentor. We are cast down but not destroyed, we are persecuted but not forsaken; thou dost save us with an infinite salvation, and no man can pluck us out of our Father's hand. Undertake for us in all our way, set before us to eat and to drink what thou wilt, grant unto us rest or unrest, send upon us the great storm or the benediction of light; only in the end make us true and good, fit for thy society, and qualified for thy service.

We have to bless thee in long, sweet hymns for thy lovingkindness and thy tender mercy: having begun to sing thy praise, our hearts would sing themselves away in grateful song, for thy mercies are without number and thy lovingkindness cannot be measured. Through the dark gate of our fear thou sendest angels of light and deliverance; through our sickness thou dost bring healing of the soul; when we are far away in the wilderness where is no sanctuary, thou dost gather us into a house not made with hands, and thou givest unto us songs amongst the rocks.

We put ourselves into thine hands for the few days we have to live—how few! Our days are as a post, speeding on its urgent way; our life

is like a weaver's shuttle, flying to and fro, too quickly for the eye to follow it; we are consumed before the moth, and we are digging our own grave every day. Do thou undertake for us in all things, granting us sanctification of every trouble, deliverance out of every perplexity, and where we expect to die may we by thy grace begin to sing.

Work within us all the miracles of thy grace, thou Holy One. We have read of thy curing of those that were diseased and raising up of those that were dead, and our poor ignorance has been startled into impious wondering as we have beheld the marvels of thy power. Help us now to realise in our own hearts the infinitely grander miracles of thy grace. Wash us with blood, cleanse us by the wondrous sacrifice of thy Son, our one and only Saviour, recover our hearts of their leprosy, and touch our blind eyes that we may see with the vision of the soul. Recover us from all alienation, from all bitter hostility, from all insubordination of heart; bring us one and all, with unanimous and joyous consent, to sit at thy feet, and to know no will but thine.

Pity our littlenesses, and let our infirmities become sacred unto thee as opportunities for the exercise of thy gracious power. Thou knowest what anger there is yet in our hearts, what pride, what ambition, what self-sufficiency, and what cunning secret trust there is; that after all the key of the kingdom may fall into our hands and be used according to our desire. Lord, cleanse our hearts of these evil spirits, and leave none of them behind, but reign thyself in the chambers thou hast purified.

We think of all for whom we ought to pray, for the sick, for the sons and daughters of pain, long, wearying, intolerable pain—God pity them, and speak some gospel too sacred and tender for our rough lips. Be thine own minister, Holy Ghost, and speak to the hearts of all who suffer. We think of the poor and the perplexed, the friendless, the wandering, the homeless; we think of the stranger within our gates who is here to join our song and come to join our supplications for all the mercies of heaven upon this wondrous life. The Lord's gospel be multiplied unto them all, and the Lord's grace be upon every heart lifted up in true and simple desire for better life.

Regard the land in which we live, give wisdom unto our counsellors and direction to those who lead our affairs. With the plentiful spirit of thy grace do thou bless and enrich our Sovereign the Queen, continue long her reign, and as her days are many may her blessings be even more. The Lord cause prosperity to return to our trade and commerce, and establish confidence in all our honourable relations with the various empires and nationalities of the earth. The Lord give unto us as individuals, as families, congregations, churches, and a nation, what we most need from heaven; bind us one and all with new oaths of loyalty to love and serve the Cross—when we are tempted to put baser devices on our banner may we hear the voice of the tempter, and know it to be the voice of the devil. Amen.

Matthew v. 17-19.

17. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

18. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and

shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven : but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (*continued*).

“**T**HINK not.” There is a possibility of having false notions about Christ. Closely observe that the subject may be right, and that our idea concerning it may be wrong. It is not enough to be attached to a good cause, we must worthily represent that cause to those who are looking on or listening. You say, for example, that you believe in Christ, but in having said so you have given me no clear notion of what you really do believe. I must ask you some questions, such as—Who was Christ? What do you believe about him? and why do you believe? The name is excellent, but what is your precise idea about the meaning and influence of that name? So, at the very opening of his ministry, Jesus Christ had to recognise the possibility of mistaken notions concerning himself. We are not at liberty to say that if a thing be true it will so shine upon the mind as to commend its truth to us and to bear down all prejudice and all misconception. Even Jesus Christ himself was not understood by his contemporaries, his disciples, or the friends of his own house. First of all, therefore, he has to do a negative work, he has to call man to the right mental mood and attitude, he has to awaken that latest and fastest of all sleepers—*Attention*. He will not be rushed upon, he will not be seized by the extemporaneous genius of mankind, he will not be treated as a feather that any fingers can catch in the wind. There must be thought, consideration—right thought, close consideration; for only as the result of patient and devout reflection, inspired and directed by the Holy Ghost, do we come to have clear, complete, right conceptions of Jesus Christ.

“Think not.” That was a legal phrase, it was used by the lawyers and by the interpreters of the law. Literally it means—“Do not get into the habit of thinking,” or, “Do not become accustomed to think that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets.” He was warning his disciples, and through them all Christian ages, against a mental habit. What is there so difficult to eradicate as unintelligent prejudice? You think, and think, and think, until, by the very processes of your own mind, you

come to the conclusion that what you have thought must be true. Christ warns us against intellectual prejudices ; mental habits that start from a wrong base, live and grow up into formidable proportions and strength. Christian attention should always be young, Christian attention should always be impressible, Christian attention should stand a long way from old and hoary prejudice ; Christian attention should always be ready to take on the phase of the moment, and to hear the note of the passing tune.

"Think not that I am come to destroy." Gentle One, thou didst not come to destroy, thy name is Saviour. And yet he did come to destroy. "For this purpose was I manifested, that I might destroy"—there he takes up the word, takes it up as thunder might take it—"the works of the devil." But no work of God would he destroy ; the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them. Think not that I am come to destroy the law—that is, to make a dead letter of it, to treat it as a mistake, to say, "Now we will utterly ignore all the ancient law and take a new point of departure, and begin again upon a new foundation." I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. What does that mean? To fulfil—that is what the noonday does to the dawn. The dawn is cold, gray, struggling, the noon is the culmination of its purpose and interest. The noon is not something different from the dawn, the noon is the dawn completed. When the first gray light fell upon the dewy hills, it said, "I mean to be noon, noon is in me, and I will climb the zenith and stand right above the world and flood it with infinite splendour and beauty." The summer fulfils the spring ; there is no schism amongst the seasons : the spring comes and does its little elementary and initial work, plants its little crocuses and does all it can for the outside world, does it quietly, sweetly, fragrantly, with wondrous grace and love, then the summer comes and does in infinite grandeur what the spring could only begin. It fulfils the spring.

Manhood fulfils childhood. You say the child is father of the man. I need no better illustration. The law prefigured and anticipated the gospel ; statutes, precepts, and commandments began that marvellous process which culminates in principle, grace, truth, inspiration, the divinely recreated and ruled intui-

tions, which sees a root by the penetration of vision which the literal schoolmaster could never give.

You are merchantmen and traders—tell me how is a promissory note fulfilled. Show it to me: I will fulfil it thus: I tear it into little pieces and throw it into the dust. Have I fulfilled the note? You instantly tell me that I have not fulfilled, I have destroyed. Then show me another and I will fulfil it thus: By thrusting it into the very midst of the fire and letting it go up in flame. Have I fulfilled it? You tell me instantly that I have done in this case as in the former; I have not fulfilled, I have destroyed. Then pass the promissory note at the date of its maturity into the hands of the man who signed it, and he pays you the money pound by pound to the last demand, and, having got the money into your hand, what has been done with the promissory note? It has been destroyed by fulfilment, and that is the only destruction possible to any law that is right.

The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. I prefer another way of stating that. The modern Greek would not understand that expression if he read it in the original tongue. "What is the meaning of that expression?" I have myself said to a modern Greek; and he said, "You have not caught the idea at all in your English." "Then what is the idea?" "Why," said he, "it is this,—Not the law was our schoolmaster, but the law was our nurse, or guardian, or care-taker, to bring us to our schoolmaster, Christ." We know what that means by daily illustration in our own English life. You send your little child in the care of some one to school. The maid takes the little creature and says, "Come, and I will take you to school," and away they go together to the place of instruction. Now, the law was our care-taker, our companion, to take us to our schoolmaster, Christ; Christ keeps a school, Christ calls those who go to his school his disciples, his scholars; Christ says, "Learn of me." Christ is the teacher of the world. The law took us hand in hand to Christ. The law is one—there is no change in the divine education of the world. We are not to suppose that Christ was an afterthought in the divine mind, or that his coming marked a sudden departure from sacred precedents. All that went before him pointed to him. Every man said, "Not I, but there cometh one after me."

The Bible from the very beginning says, "I am going to be a gospel." If the spire of your church is rightly built it will say to the artistic observer on its very first course of stones, "I am going to be a pinnacle." There will be a set in the very first lines of stones which the artistic eye can see, which, being interpreted, is—Pinnacle, sharp, finger-like, pointing to the sky. It does not begin to be a spire a long way up, but from the very first, if it has been conceived by a true architect; it begins to be a spire when its very first stone is laid in the depth of the earth. So with this Bible-building. I did not know what it was going to be, but I saw that it was going to be something other than it was in itself just at the particular moment of my observation. Now that I go back upon it with more learning and with a keener power of observation, I see that from the very first verse this Book meant to be a benediction, to have set upon its uppermost points these words, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." So the law is not broken into unrelated parts, it is from the beginning meant to be a complete and final cosmos.

What wonder, then, if Jesus Christ should continue to say, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled"? In the seventeenth verse you have the word "fulfil," in the eighteenth verse you have the word "fulfilled," and yet they are not the same word as they were originally written. In the eighteenth verse the word fulfilled means—accomplished, a purpose turned into a reality, a seed fully grown into a great tree, to which nothing could be added in proportion or in beauty.

"One jot or one tittle." Why, then, is there nothing superfluous in the law? There is nothing insignificant in all the works of God. Pluck me a grass-blade, and let me see what I can do with it. How many veins has it which could be done without? How much blood circulates through all this veinous system? How much less might have done? Can you mend it? Can you sharpen its point, can you accelerate its circulation, can you pluck out of it one tiny fibre that the little thing could have done without? Take care how you touch it, for it is God's handiwork.

"One jot." One *yod*, a little thing that is not a letter in itself, so much as the adjunct or the helper of some other letter—a *yot*, a silent thing. The name of the wife of Abraham was turned from

Sarai to Sarah, and it was the *yod* that did it: it was that little, silent, insignificant adjunct that turned her into Princess. God is careful of his *yod*, or *yot*, or *jot*,—he does not dot his *i* for nothing, nor cross his *t* merely for decoration: there is blood in the act. Take care; touch not the Lord's anointed, and do his prophets no harm. The destruction of the law by literalists and meddlers, by mere outside observers and worshippers, such as the Scribes and Pharisees, begins by interfering with the jot and tittle. Who would take a large sharp knife and begin all at once in shocking and impious vulgarity to scratch out the whole law? And yet many a man who would shrink from that coarse blasphemy begins with finer instruments to interfere with the *yod*, the dot, the tittle. He says, "Nobody will miss that." We do things little by little, insidiously, that we never could do by thunder-like assaults.

All character seems to go down by interfering with the *yod*, the dot, the jot, the tittle, the iota, the subscript, the accent, the breathing-point. Who jumps right off the temple top into pits of darkness at one grand leap? A man begins by giving up the morning service, by going to church occasionally, by dropping little customs as he calls them, and comparatively insignificant habits. What is he doing? He has begun a work, the end of which is destruction, ruin, death. It is to me no wonder, therefore, that Jesus Christ should depose and degrade into an inferior position whosoever shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so. Observe how these words go, in what perfect and suggestive rhythm they fall upon the ear—break and teach. And in the second member of the sentence observe how the same rhythm is preserved—do and teach. Work begins in the individual relation to the law; when I have broken a commandment I long to get companionship, to bring others into the same condemnation: having broken it, to justify the breach, to show that it was better broken than not, and on the ruins of my own character set up as the seducer of other men.

Then do and teach. Who can teach if he does not first do? If he be a mere hireling the whole words would have been committed to memory and would trip off his reluctant lips without music or force. My teacher must at least *try* to do what he says. If he fail I will not despise him, if his efforts be sincere. I know that human infirmity will mar men, and diabolic temptation will

do its utmost to despoil and pervert the purpose of his heart, but his will shall count as his deed.

We learn by doing, we become preachers by being practisers, they that do the will shall know the doctrine. The Lord reveals himself to his industrious servants. It is when we are persevering on the right road, scrubbing and drudging at oftentimes unwelcome duties, that God's angel stands up before us and flings upon our faith a sudden and gracious light. Blessed is that servant who is faithful, he shall have cities in heaven to rule.

Jesus, then, came to fulfil the law. There was a *moral* law, the meaning of which was obedience. He became obedient, even unto the death of the cross: he had no will but God's—"Not my will but thine be done." There was the fulfilment of the moral law. There was a *sacrificial* law, the slaying of animals and outpouring of blood and offering of gifts. This man was both the Priest and the Victim. He built the altar and slew himself upon it with priestly hands. Thus he fulfilled the sacrificial law. There was a *national* law, a theocracy, a gathering together of the people, a federating of tribes and sections, a grand nationalistic idea. How did he fulfil that? By founding his Church. Upon this rock I build my Church. Empires mean, when rightly translated, *Churches*; Politics is a word which means, held up to its highest point, *Morality*; Nationality, too often debased into a geographical term, causing many distractions and controversial definitions, really means, when fructified, the Church, the Redeemed Church, the *Theocracy*, the God-Government. The kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and his Father, having fulfilled the law as a tree fulfils the acorn, and God shall be all in all.

We are in the line of this education, we are helping on this glorious ministry. Would God I could arouse every sleeper and inflame with Heaven's fire every reluctant heart to take this upward progress. Teach no other notion of advancement, move with Moses, the minstrels, the prophets, the Christ—be in that succession, and if you have not ten cities to rule, you have five, or one, or some share in the final and everlasting dominion.

Behold, I set before you the door, wide open, of a grand opportunity. Seize it, and be thankful and glad with the joy of rapture.

PRAVER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we bless thee for the gift of rest. Enable us to take it as thou dost give it, with joyfulness, and may we, as the result of its acceptance, be stronger, and happier, and more useful in the world. Thou dost cause a great sleep to fall upon the life of man, and out of that sleep, as out of a grave, dost thou bring him again, quieted and rested, and blest. Thou hast also given a rest for the soul, a time of quietness and peace for the mind ; may we enjoy it to the full, knowing that to-morrow will bring its toil and its burden, and that soon we shall be in the world again, confused by its manifold tumult. May this be a Sabbath in the soul, a rest in the heart, a benediction pronounced upon the inner life, and under its soothing and healing influence may our best nature rise again to claim thyself, with all the impatience and delight of filial love.

May thy word dwell in our hearts richly ; let all the sweetness of its music be heard by the ear of our soul, and may the light, which is above the brightness of the sun, shine upon our entire life and make it beautiful with the beauteousness of heaven. We come to thine house as men flee to a sanctuary, a refuge in the time of peril, a shelter in the great storm, and a place of prospect from which they can see the better time, the brighter morning, the greater land. Disappoint no soul that waits upon thee in trembling, reverent love. Speak large words in reply to our prayer, and while we are yet praying, do thou flood the soul with thy love, and lift us above all that is mean in earth and time.

Thy hand has been put out towards us in great richness of love, thou hast withheld no good thing from us, thou hast spread our table, morning, noon, and night, thou hast been round about our dwelling-place as a defence, thou hast kept the storm from destroying us, and thou hast given thine angels charge concerning our life. Therefore do we return to thy holy sanctuary with a new song upon our lips, and a new gladness in our hearts. Meet us, we humbly pray thee, according to the urgency of our need, our pain, and our desire. Where the burden is heavy, thou canst lift it wholly off the trembling and crushed spirit ; where it is more needful that it should remain than that it should be removed, thou canst give sustaining and comforting grace. Not our will but thine be done, herein. Where the pain is intolerable, sharpening itself into a great fiery agony, the Lord come with heaven's own balm and save those who are in great distress, lest they be swallowed up of sorrow overmuch. Where our desire is towards the heavens and all heavenly things, becoming a solemn and urgent prayer for the indwelling of the kingdom of Christ in the heart, thou wilt not say No ; thine answer shall be a great Yes of acquiescence, and in the heart desiring thy Son there shall be a great light and a peculiar joy.

We would put the remainder of our life into thine hands, we would think

nothing, be nothing, do nothing, but under the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit. Undertake for us, we humbly pray thee, and send us bread, little or much—light, dull or splendid, and do thou make us contented because it is of thy giving and sending, and may our joy be in thyself and not in the passing circumstances of the dying day. Where any heart is set against thee stonily, with obduracy and obstinacy of feeling, in great rebellion and tumult, the Lord break not such a heart to its destruction, but break it to its healing. And bring in those that are afar off, that they may see thy light and be affrighted and saved by thy grace and thy redemption. And where any are in great fear and distress of mind because of their relation to thyself, send forth the spirit of thy Son into their hearts, the spirit of thy redeeming and sanctifying grace, recall all tender memories and all blessed associations, awaken the feelings that are lying dead, and give to such to know the power of the assurance of faith. Help us all to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus. Make us true, honourable, sincere, before heaven and earth, enable us to enter into the spirit of thy gospel and to exemplify all its beauty and its tenderness. Save us from the poverty of the letter which killeth, and lead us into the spirit which giveth life, and may all our conduct be attuned by thy Spirit and lifted up by thy grace, and may it become a great light shining afar to the guidance of any who are in doubt and fear.

The Lord pardon our sins, and delight in doing it, the Lord repeat his miracle of grace in our life every day. We say this in the name of Jesus, our Priest, our Intercessor, the Daysman between thyself and us : thou hearest him always, thy delight is to look upon his face, and to consider what he has done. Behold our shield and look upon the face of thine anointed, and from the inner and hidden sanctuary send us forgiveness and bless us with all spiritual help. Disappoint the bad man in all his evil counsels ; cause him to forget himself, and strike him dumb when he would speak forbidden words.

The Lord help every honest and good man to do good whilst his little day lasts, and may we all be found in the end good and faithful servants, inspired by thy spirit, upheld by thy grace, made strong by thy truth, rejoicing in the assurance that the life spent in thy service will be crowned with heaven in thy presence. Amen.

Matthew v. 20.

20. "For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

THE GREAT CHALLENGE.

FOR *righteousness* read *rightness*. Then the text will read, "For I say unto you, that except your rightness, your notion and idea of what is right, shall exceed the notion and idea entertained by the Scribes and Pharisees as to what is right, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Given, a ministry which begins in this tone, to know how it will end ? It is impossible that it can end otherwise than in *crucifixion*. The cross is

here. If the Scribes and Pharisees get to know that a man has been speaking so of them, they will never rest until they *kill* him. The shadow of the Cross is in everything spoken and done by Jesus Christ. He here assails the religion and the respectability, the learning and the influence of his day. This is more than a speech, it is a *challenge*, it is an impeachment, it is an indictment of high treason—how then can the speaker finish his eloquence but in a peroration of blood? He must die for this, or play the hypocrite further on. A man who talks so, in any age, even including the nineteenth century, must *die*. The reason we do not die now is that we do not speak the truth. The preacher now follows those whom he appears to lead; if he put himself into a right attitude to his age, its corruption, its infidelities, and its hypocrisies, he would be killed. No preacher is now killed, because no preacher is now faithful.

Consider who these Scribes and Pharisees were. They were the bishops and clergy and ministers of the day. Suppose a reformer should now arise and say concerning the whole machine ecclesiastical and spiritual, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness that is turned out of that machine ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." I do not know that we should nail him to wood with vulgar iron nails, but we would take care to pinch him so in bread and water as to take the life out of him. Christianity is nothing if not an eternal challenge in the direction of honesty, reality, breadth, charity. Has not the whole Church, in all its fragments and communions, become a mere theological grinding machine for turning out certain quantities and colours, of regulation extent and tone?

Religion was polluted at the well-head. It had become a ceremony, a profession, a dead adherence to dear formalities, synagogue-going, word-splitting, hand-washing, and an elaborate system of trifling and refining. Understand who these men were. They *knew* the law: the Scribes spent their time in copying it, in expounding, or rather in confounding and confusing those who listened to their peculiar expositions of its solemn requirements. They were not illiterate, so far as the law was concerned: they knew every letter, they had a thousand traditions concerning it, they formed themselves into synods and consistories for the purpose of extending, defining, and otherwise treating the require-

ments of the law. They were so familiar with it as to miss its music, as we have become so familiar with the sunlight as not to heed its beauty. A rattle, a splutter in the air, will excite more attention than the great, broad, calm shining of the king of day. The Scribes were the men who professed to have the keys of the kingdom of heaven upon their girdles, and yet Jesus Christ, the reputed son of the carpenter, arises and says to them, "Ye are not in the kingdom of heaven at all; actors, mimics, pretenders, painted ones, ye are not in the spirit and the genius of the heavenly kingdom!" No man dares this day say a word against a bishop or a minister—I speak of all Churches, and not of one in particular—without being publicly and severely reprimanded for his impious audacity. Jesus gathered himself up into one strain of power, and hurled his energy in one blighting condemnation against the whole of the Scribe and Pharisee system of his day. Beware! He was *killed*! He did not talk against disreputable persons, as the world accounts repute; the Scribes and the Pharisees were the most respectable people of their generation, they were looked up to as leaders and guides by those amongst whom they lived. They were the saints, the pillars of the Church, the lights of the synagogue, the very cream of respectable society; yet this Galilean peasant beards them all, lays his soft but sinewy fingers upon their throats, and says, "Stand back, ye defile and pervert the kingdom ye profess to serve." Do not, therefore, let us be too bold and too faithful. The cost of integrity everywhere in a corrupt age is—*death*.

I infer from Christ's treatment of the Scribes and Pharisees that it is possible for men to *deceive themselves* on religious methods—to suppose that they are in the kingdom of God when they are thousands of miles away from it. Is it possible that any of *us* can have fallen under the power of that delusion? I fear it may be so. What is your Christianity? A letter, a written creed, a small placard that can be published, containing a few so-called fundamental points and lines? Is it an affair of words and phrases and sentences following one another in regulated and approved succession? If so, and only so, there is not one drop of Christ's blood in it: it is not Christianity, it is a little intellectual conceit, a small moral prejudice. Christianity is life, love, charity, nobleness—it is *sympathy with God*.

My belief is that if Jesus Christ were to come into England *to-day* the first thing he would do would be to condemn all places of so-called worship. What he would do with other buildings I cannot tell, but it is plain that he would shut up all churches and chapels. They are too narrow ; they worship the letter ; they are the idolaters of details ; they are given up to the exaggeration of mint, rue, anise, cummin, herbs and weeds of the garden and the field ; but charity, nobleness, honour, all-hopefulness, infinite patience with evil—where are they ? If judgment begins at the house of God, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ? In disputing about the letter, the danger is that we neglect and despise the *spirit* ; we quarrel about trifles ; we are founders of sects and parties, and the champions of our own inventions ; we pay tithe of mint and anise, and neglect the weightier matters of the law. The Christianity of this day, so far as I have been enabled to examine it, has no common meeting ground. If Jesus Christ came amongst us now he would have to call upon the leaders of the various denominations, and if he did not happen to begin at the right quarter he would have but scant hospitality. If he called upon the Independents first, the Plymouth Brethren would decline to see him ; and if he called upon the Primitive Methodists in the first instance the Independents would urge the claims of an earlier ancestry. He would find us in pugilistic attitude, separated by cobwebs, or bickering and chaffering with one another over high walls, and pinning sheets of paper over little crevices in those walls lest any of the saintly air should get through to the other side. Is this the Church Christ died to redeem ? Is this the blood-bought host ? Where is our common meeting ground ?

Let me now show you what religion had been brought to by the Scribes and Pharisees in their time. I called attention to some of these points in a discourse not long ago. I cannot do better than ask your attention again to those very points. Take the instance of Sabbath-keeping. To what pass do you suppose the Scribes and Pharisees had brought this matter of the fourth commandment ? Recent writers upon the life of Christ have been at great pains in reading the Talmud (or doctrine), the Mishna (or repetition), and the Gemara (or supplement) ; and it would be amusing, if it were not distressing, to find how these

theological carpenters have whittled away the broad, grand, solemn commandments of our Father in heaven. With regard to the Sabbatic observance, recent authorities tell us that the Scribes and their allies laid it down that a knot which could be untied with *one hand* might be untied on the Sabbath day, but not one that required *both* hands. A man might carry a burden upon his shoulder, but if that burden were slung between *two*, or even slung between the shoulders, the carrying of it would be a breach of the sanctity of the Sabbath day. It was unlawful to carry a loaf in the public streets on the Sabbath, but if two people carried the same loaf the act was good. It was so written in the Mishna and the Gemara. Understand this. If a man carried a loaf in the public streets, it was breaking the Sabbath day; but if he got some other man to take hold of another end, they two could be carrying it without a breach of the commandment! This was the state of things when that carpenter's Son came into the world. The law forbade any visiting upon the Sabbath day—when I say the law, I mean the traditional law—yet the Scribes must visit; how then was this difficulty to be overcome? They fixed a chain at one end of the street, and another chain at the other end of the street, and they called the enclosure one house, and thus the painted hypocrites went backward and forward, dining and drinking, and feasting and revelling, and yet keeping the Sabbath day! Two thousand cubits was a Sabbath day's journey, but two thousand cubits was too short a walk for some of these traditionalists. What did they do? On the Friday they went two thousand cubits and deposited a loaf, and where a man deposited a loaf he was entitled to call the place his home for the time being. So the literalist walked his two thousand cubits to his loaf, and then began his Sabbath day's journey of two thousand cubits further on. Do you wonder that when a man whose soul was aflame with righteousness came into such corruption, he damned the society of his day, and said it was not in the kingdom of heaven? This is the way to try Christ, this will show you what he was—no trimmer, no oscillating theological pendulum, now here, now there—but a fire, a judgment, a stern word, a living critic of the corrupt heart. It is in such instances as these that I see the shining of his real personality, and it is in such denunciations as are in the text that I see the beginning of his crucifixion,

When the Pharisee invited him to dine, he went in and sat down to meat without washing his hands, and the Pharisee marvelled that he should eat with hands unwashed. His marvelling was audible in all probability, and Jesus Christ answered it with the severest denunciation. We cannot understand the importance which was attached by the Pharisees and others to the washing of hands before eating. Not to wash the hands before a meal was, we are told by competent annotators, equal to homicide. Dwell upon that fact for one moment. Not to wash the hands before eating was, in the estimation of the Pharisees, an act equal to the killing of a man. Jesus Christ knowing this, went into the house of the Pharisee, and sat down to eat without hand-washing. Did it take no courage so to act upon personal conviction? Was this a weak-minded man, was this an effeminate Redeemer? Does it cost nothing to rise up in daily, manly protest against the most settled and cherished usages of the time? Give him the honour due to his energy, consider the circumstances by which he was surrounded, and then tell me if he was the carpenter's son or the Son of God.

So far was this matter carried by the Pharisees that no man, but themselves probably, could touch the parchment or skin upon which the law was written without being pronounced unclean. So we learn from those who take an interest in such studies that the question was asked of them, "How is it that a man can touch the pages of Homer and be clean, and yet he cannot touch the parchment or skin on which the law is written without being defiled?" The answer was, "Because of the peculiar sacredness of the law." Thus extremes meet. It was because the law was so holy, that no man might touch the parchment on which it was written without being pronounced ceremonially defiled. And one commentator tells us that there was something like an ironical and sarcastic joke among the people of the time, who said to those high authorities in the law, "How is it that we can touch the bones of a dead ass without contracting pollution, and yet cannot touch the bones of John Hyrcanus, the most saintly of the High Priests, without being unclean?" And the casuistic answer was, "Because Hyrcanus was a holy man, and his very holiness caused those who touched his bones to be unclean."

It was to this pass that religion had been brought by the Scribes

and Pharisees, the traditionalists and the literalists of the time before Christ. There were hundreds of refinements, colourings, degrees of violation of the law and breaches of requirements of the letter, and it required a man a lifetime to read all that had been written as to the violation of the law, so that by the time he had become acquainted with all the traditional exactions and requirements of the literalists he was an old man. Can you wonder that when an earnest soul came to take charge of the kingdom of heaven upon earth, he sent a fire on such paper palaces and devoured the walls of such sectarian and monstrous restrictions? Jesus Christ came to give *liberty*. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." With the besom of destruction he swept these things into the sea. He said, "Away with them, the kingdom of heaven is purity, peace, love, charity."

What say you to following this new Leader? I like his tone, it sounds like the tone of an honest heart. But for him we should have fallen in the wake of these men, in all probability; and our religion would have consisted of innumerable lines of exact requirements, punctual observance, ceremonial cleanness, until our souls would have been vexed within us, and life would have been reduced to one daily chafe and fret. Jesus Christ came and said, "The kingdom of heaven is within you. What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, O man, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God?" The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

This question arises, and I would put it with the sharpest emphasis of which the human voice is capable, were it in my power to do so—*What is our religion?* I dare not ask what mine is. It is church-going, it is ceremony, it is going to a particular church, it is singing out of a particular hymn-book, it is being set within a certain regular surrounding of circumstances. I am so afraid of my religion—I speak of mine that I may not reproach others—becoming a question of routine and regulation. I now ask a man to put down on paper what he believes, then I take it up and I examine it, and I say, "You are orthodox." To another man I say, "Put down on paper what you believe." The man writes it. I examine it, and say, "Heterodox." The orthodox man has gone out of the church. I ask him to bring in his week's

report of work done, and he says, "I bound your certificate upon my forehead, I went amongst men as orthodox, and I have sent at least two hundred people to hell for not believing what I believe. I got them to put down on paper what they believed, and I found they did not know what they did believe, and so I sent them all to perdition, and I have waked up the Church; and I will do the same next week." Heterodox man, bring in *your* report. How does it read? "Visited ten poor families, gave each of them five shillings and a word of encouragement, and told them to send for me if I could be of any help to them at any time. Saw a poor woman sitting on a door-step, without a friend or a home in the world—

" 'O it was pitiful,
Near a whole city full,
Home she had none.'

Made an appointment with her, gave her something to be going on with, and I intend to see this woman as often as possible, until I get her established in life." Who is the Christian?

What, then, is Christianity? A broken heart on account of sin—going to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the wounded One, the Priest, and saying—

" 'For ever here my rest shall be,
Close to thy bleeding side,
This all my hope and all my plea,
For me the Saviour died.' "

Then, out of that coming all the beautifulness of life, which grows, and grows only, in the garden of God.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, surely thy word is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. Thine eye of judgment is as a great fire, from the light of which nothing can be hidden. Thou triest the reins and searchest the hearts of the children of men. Thou wilt not be satisfied by the offering of the hand, thou dost demand the loyalty of our undivided love. Thou dost make great charges upon us—who can answer thy call, for thou demandest the whole heart? Surely we are surrounded by infinite temptations, the earth claims us, sense and time urge their importunate appeals, the necessity of the passing hour claims to be answered instantly—yet thou dost thunder down from thy heavens upon us the demand for our united heart. Surely thou dost also send grace, so that thou supportest the soul on which thou dost lay this great obligation; thou givest more grace, thy commands are equalled by thy mercy; if thou dost call for much, thou dost give the needful strength; if the burden be heavy, thou dost give us power to sustain it every whit. Enable us to look into our hearts and to see the condition of our spirit, and awaken within us the cry, Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew within me a right spirit.

Save us from imagining that by fulfilling the letter we have fulfilled the law, and that by our outward observances we prove that we have entered into the inner sanctuary of thy kingdom. Show us how possible it is to read thy Book in the letter without understanding it in the spirit, and how easy it is to wash the hands, and how all but impossible to cleanse the heart. Herein is thy gospel sweet to us, the very word we need, the one voice that touches with its sacred music, our wonder and our desire. The blood of Jesus Christ thy Son cleanseth from all sin: thou hast made provision for the cleansing of every heart; we bless thee for its fulness, we thank thee that every one of us can avail himself of thy grace; we bless thee that there is no guilt too great for thy cleansing. Thou canst come over the mountain of our transgression though it be high as the heaven, and thou canst melt it so that it fall away, and thou canst meet us in reconciliation, and in all the warmth and joy of eternal affection.

We praise thee that we may read thy word to our understanding, to the profit of our heart, to the sanctification and obedience of our will, and so as to realize all the comfort and strength which thou dost design to give unto the life of men. Let a light shine upon thy Word whilst we read it, so that we may see its inner beauty, its heavenly grace, and let thy Spirit work in our heart that we may give great and glad welcome to all the messages of Heaven.

We have done the things we ought not to have done, there is not a finger upon our hands that has not sinned against thee, and thou knowest, in number—

ing the hairs of our head, that our sins are more in number than they. Our way has been broadened out for the society of the evil, and our souls have been shut up so as to exclude the light of the good. We will not seek for words in self-defence, nor shall we try to build up a high wall to shut out the judgments of God. We will fall down before thee, and in tearfulness and contrition and penitence, each will say, "God be merciful to me a sinner, and repeat thy miracle in my cleansing and redemption."

Help us to live the remainder of our days before thee in all reverence, quietness, love, and usefulness. Enable us to remember the brevity of the day, the sudden coming of the night, and to be obedient with all diligence and ardour whilst we can. Wherein thou hast prospered us in basket and in store, let these goodnesses lead us to repentance, let all these proofs of thy outward regard for our life lead us to consider how much thou hast done for our redemption and sanctification, and thus may we grope our way little by little from that which is outward and perishable to that which is internal and indestructible.

According to our necessity do thou now come to us. Touch every one of us with a beam of light from heaven, speak a word specially to each heart; whilst the great general truth is being proclaimed in universal terms, may a tender accent fall upon every ear, as a special token of thy peculiar care and love. May the old forget their age in the gladness of high communion with heaven, may the youthful imagination be touched into a religious wonder whilst the great truths of heaven are being proclaimed with fulness and unction. May the slave of time and the serf of the earth pause in his toil to hear of the kingdom wherein the service is rest. Heal us wherein we are sick, give us light wherein the darkness is too thick to be penetrated by our own vision, and lead us evermore, one step at a time, not where we want to go, but where it is best for us to be.

The Lord's angels be our servants, the Lord's light be our morning, and the infinite gospel of the blood of Christ be our hope and joy in the time of torment and despair. Amen.

Matthew v. 21-32.

21. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time (after the return from Babylon, when synagogues began to be established), Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of (liable to) the judgment:

22. But I (the personal pronoun is emphatic) say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca (any term of personal contempt), shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool! shall be in danger of hell fire.

23. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar (if thou shouldst be offering), and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee;

24. Leave there thy gift before the altar (reconciliation is better than liturgical propriety), and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

25. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and Thou be cast into prison.

26. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

27. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery.

28. But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

29. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee ; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

30. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee ; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

31. It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement ;

32. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery ; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

DIVINE EDUCATION.

THIS shows us the principle upon which the education of the world was being conducted by the Divine Teacher. Perhaps the education could not have begun otherwise than very roughly. The mind is not prepared for the higher form of truths, and the more spiritual application of them at the beginning. We all need to be trained. In our higher training we must go, as in our lower tuition, a step at the time. Do not be too hasty in your movement. Easy come, easy go, is a proverb which applies in many directions. Always read over again the last lesson before you begin the next, if you wish to be really accurate and profound scholars. You know how you train your child. First you lay down some broad and general commandment. He is not to break things, he is not to endanger himself, he is not to touch fire, he is to keep away from the water, he is not to use his little fists, and so in some broad and general way you indicate what the child is not to do. If you spoke to the child in any other terms and in any other tone, your education might be of a very superior order, but it would be utterly lost, so far as the child's appreciation and obedience are concerned. You must begin where the child can begin, you must humble yourself and take upon you the form of a servant, and become obedient unto death, the death of your intellectual pride, even the death of the cross, and must break up your words into very little tones and syllables in order to suit your

youthful auditor. It would become you, perhaps, by reason of the elevation and range of your own intellectual acquirements, to adopt a very high tone to the child ; but you must come down out of your intellectual sky and talk the plain and common language of the earth if you would make any good impression upon the child's mind and heart.

So at the beginning it was, perhaps, enough to say, "Thou shalt not kill." But there came a time in the training and advancement of the world when a keener tone was to enter into the divine teaching. That keener tone we hear in the words that are now before us. Christ has brought us a long way from the broad and rough commandment, Thou shalt not kill. He asks us to pass a line and enter into a kingdom in which we are not to think unkindly or unjustly of one another. He discovers for us that the principle is the same in evil speaking as in murder. With those sharp eyes of his, to which the darkness and the light are both alike, he says that in the unjust thought is the principle of manslaughter. It would, therefore, have been but poor work on his part to come down and repeat the old broad general morality ; he must bring in a new standard, he must set up a new kingdom, he must flood the world with a purer light. Herein he sets up his throne of judgment amongst us to-day, and he calls us up one by one, to be measured and weighed. Let us hasten to obey his call.

What have you to say? He will ply the charge of slaying men—what is your answer? An instantaneous, frank, unreserved denial. So far, so good. Have you ever thought one unjust thought respecting your neighbour? Where your glibness now? If you have, then you are still in the old school, and you have not entered into the Christian kingdom at all. Where then are the Christians? Judged by that high and pure standard, my mournful answer to the inquiry is, I cannot tell. There are no Christians. Jesus says to us, in effect, "If you come to me, simply saying that your hands are clear of human blood, you belong to the old school, you are faithful scholars of them of old time ; but the first condition of entrance into my school, or the first proof of being in that school, is that a man be not angry with his brother without a cause. There must be no evil thinking, evil speaking, evil judgment, uncharitable criticism."

Who then can stand the test of that fire? "What do ye more than others? You do not kill, you do not steal, you do not commit adultery, you do not make yourselves amenable to the law of the land—what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans the same?" So he definitely chides us, and we have no answer.

Still he would lead us on little by little; he would not deny us a place in his kingdom if we can honestly say, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief. I am still in the body, and I feel all the passion and urgency of my lower nature. Sometimes a cruel thought does arise in my heart, and sometimes I give too generous a welcome to uncharitable criticism of my brother, but afterwards I hate myself for having entertained so vile a guest. God be merciful to me a sinner." If such be our speech, then it pleaseth the great Christ, the Man of the shepherdly heart, to give us a position in his school and teaching.

Let us beware of these vain distinctions of ours. A man does not kill, and therefore he claims to be a Christian! Jesus Christ says to him, "That is an insufficient and untenable claim altogether. A thousand men who never go to church can say the same thing. You must adopt a higher tone, or you know nothing of the spirit of the Cross and the love of God." Thus our preachers must urge upon us the ideal side of things, and we must not pardon them if they do other. They must not come down to us and tell us that not killing is equal to loving. Though they condemn themselves with every breath they breathe, and thrust sharp swords into their own hearts with every syllable they utter, yet this must be done, the ideal must be lifted up and magnified that we may see how far short we fall or come of being true Christ-ones. We call ourselves respectable persons; so we are, with the publican's respectability. There is not a man here to-day, probably, who cannot walk up and down the thoroughfares of the city and defy the magistrate to touch him. That is not Christianity, that is respectable paganism—that is not the religion of the sanctuary of Christ, that is ceremonialism, high paganism, outward cleanliness. Christianity is a condition of the heart.

How is it with us when that question, keen as a sting of fire, is put to us, namely, What about your inner life, your heart? You do not kill, but you think evil of your neighbour; you do not slay

a man with the sword, but you whisper unkind words about your friend. You do not violate the open laws of decency, but yours is an uncharitable judgment; you have not passed a counterfeit coin, but you would take away a reputation and wound a heart. You would not openly tell a lie, you say you scorn to tell a lie; yet if two constructions can be put upon any human action, you elect the worse of the two. If that is true of you or me, by so much we are not in the kingdom of Christ at all. We may be expositors and critics and respectable pagans, but we are not in the Christian kingdom at all.

Terrible is the talk of Christ's as a great burning judgment, and it keeps us at bay like a fire. What wonder if sometimes our hearts are so dejected as to think that no progress is being made with Christian civilization at all. When a man seventy years of age can talk just as he did at thirty, as uncharitably and unfeelingly and hopelessly about his kind; when the very first thought that occurs to his mind is one of ungenerous criticism, how can he have been in the school of Christ? Charity thinketh no evil, charity suffereth long and is kind, charity believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, charity never faileth, and without charity no man can be a follower of Christ.

Jesus Christ is very urgent about these human relations of ours; therefore he says, "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." We are not to remember whether we have anything against our brother; that would be easily done, our memory needs no spur on that side, we so soon forget our own delinquencies. Where did my last word of fire drop? What heart did I wound in my last speech? On what right did I trample in my last transaction? Whom did I strike down in order to accomplish my last purpose? Let me examine myself thus, and I shall be a long time in getting to the altar. At the altar, whited, painted hypocrite? Leave the altar and go away to discharge your plain human duties, bind up hearts you have broken, comfort those you have thrown into dejection, and apologise on both knees to the woman, the child, the man, you have injured, and then come and take up your hymn-book and lay your offering on the altar purer than snow.

I do not wonder that Jesus Christ does not make much progress in the world, and I do not wonder that any old trickster in words and conjurer in doctrines can get more followers than Christ. He keeps men away from him by these judgments of fire. His doctrine is a continual rebuke, the very holiness of his speech creates a torment in the heart that is not equal to obedience. But wherein he is severe he makes good work; he builds slowly, but he means that no wind shall ever throw down the towers which he rears. He collects his members very gradually, and by a gate most narrow and strait does he bring men to him, but they never leave him. He is not building a beautiful house of smoke which the wind will blow away; he is building a Church, and he has calculated the strength of the gates of hell, and having built his masonry with a slow hand, he says, "It is finished—the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

He now passes on to give directions concerning the crucifixion of the flesh and the senses, and he lays down this great principle,—and I include the whole teaching under it,—that under the stress of fierce temptation either the *body* has to be denied or the *soul* has to be injured. He says in effect, "I put the case before you thus: temptation will come, and one or other must fall, the body or the soul." The body says, "I will have my way, I will enjoy myself, I will throw off restraint, I will do what I please, every appetite shall be gratified." And the soul sits as far back as it can, in the foul house, and mourns like an exile. I see it, I see its drooping countenance, its eyelids heavy and red, I hear its great sob, I see its infinite dejection. The great principle is that denial has to come into your life *somewhere*. You deny the body or you deny the soul. Deny the body and the soul comes to the front and floods your life with sacred light, with heaven's pure splendour. Gratify the body, and the soul retires, and its hot tears fall in the hearing of God. Self-slaughter takes place somewhere; it is for us to say where it shall take place. It can take place in the cutting off of a hand, or in the thrusting of a dagger into the very fountain of life, and it lies within the power of the human will to say where the wound shall be inflicted.

There is a bloated man who never said "No" to an appetite. You see it in his face. That is not the face of his childhood

developed into noble age, that is another face : he is made now in the image and likeness of the devil. His very eye has a twist in it, his very speech has lost its music. He does not want to come into a pure home, he does not want to look upon the unsullied flowers, he does not care to listen to the birds singing their sweet song in the spring light. His affections are elsewhere. All the urgency of his life moves amid other directions, he is less a man than he ever was, unhappily.

Here is a man who has crucified the flesh, the affections, and the lusts thereof ; he has cut off his right hand, plucked out his right eye, struck himself everywhere with heavy blows, but his soul throws over his maimed condition a sacred light, a beautiful expression. The form is rugged, the countenance is marred, but through it there is a soft shining light which tells that the soul is growing angelward and Godward, and every day sweetens his nature and prepares it for higher society.

In looking at all these injunctions, let me urge you to beware of nibbling criticism and exposition. It would be easily possible for us to spend many mornings over the discussion of the paragraph which is now before us. I question whether it would be profitable to do so. In reading Holy Scripture seize the principle, get hold of the genius, the divine meaning, and in proportion as you are critical about the mere letter, are you in danger of losing the divine inspiration. Suppose, to make the meaning clearer, I should undertake to explain to you the meaning of the word *sky*. I begin by telling you that it is a word of one syllable, I point out that that one syllable consists of three letters, I call your attention to the fact that it opens with the nineteenth letter of the English alphabet, and that it closes with the last letter but one in that alphabet. What do you know about the meaning of the word *sky*? You know nothing of it. Let me tell you that the word *sky* is not to be looked at or spelled or taken to pieces by rough vivisection of mere letters, but lift up your eyes when the morning is spreading itself above you in all its beauty and freshness, and one look into the great arch will do more for your understanding of the term *sky* than all the mere conjuring with the three letters that the most skilful literalist could ever do.

So it is possible for you to take to pieces every one of those words in this long paragraph, and yet to know at the end nothing

about the meaning of Christ's doctrine. His doctrine is one of inward purity, of spiritual rectitude, of absolute and loving sympathy with God. There be those, no doubt, who are most anxious to know what was meant by *Raca*, and Fool, and Hell-fire. To take these words to pieces might appear instructive, but so far as the doctrine of Christ is concerned it might easily be destructive. *Raca*, for example, is a forgotten word. Words come and go. To us it means nothing, but as used by those in the olden time it meant insolence, contempt—the man who called another “*Raca*,” despised him, spat upon him, humbled the manhood made in the image and likeness of God. We have no such word amongst us now, but we have the contemptuous feeling, we have the up-gathering of our conventional respectability and our drawing aside from the unworthy, the meanly dressed, the unfavoured, the great unwashed. The great teaching of Christ is that contempt of humanity is punished by being thrown into Gehenna, the valley given up to fire.

In discussing the Temptation of our Lord, we inferred the character of the tempter from the kind of temptations which he urged. We might apply the same principle to the teaching of Christ, and infer the character of Christ from the kind of teaching which he submitted to the world. Mark the undivided responsibility which he assumes—“I say unto you.” The personal pronoun is there emphatic, it takes into itself all the meaning. In the first instance you have a plural term, “It hath been said by *them* of old time, but”—now comes the singular term—“I say unto you.” There is no division of responsibility, there is no hiding of himself behind multitudinous precedents, there is no mere focalization of the wisdom of the dead ages. Here is personal responsibility, clear, definite, undivided, incommunicable. It required some courage on the part of a mere peasant to stand up and say to a great multitude of people, “I put myself above all that ever taught you in the ages gone.” Yet mark how what he said was in fulfilment of truth and not in destruction of the ancient law. Christ did not say, “You may kill if you please,” he accepted the teaching, “Thou shalt not kill,” and he carried it on a step further. He said, “Out of the heart killing comes; make the tree good and the fruit will be good. It is no use for

the hand to be able to uplift itself and show that it is without one drop of blood upon it—the question is, How many murders has the heart committed?” This is the true doctrine of development, this is the true fulfilment of the law.

Mark the intense *spirituality* of all Christ's teaching. He says, “How is it with the heart, how is it with the spirit, what would you do if you could, how far is your respectability a mere deference to the clay god of custom, how far is your outward cleanliness a mere expression of deference to the usages of the time?” A man is what his heart is, “A man is no stronger than his weakest point,” says the strategist, and the moralist adds, “A man is no better than in his feeblest morality.” We are to be judged by the heart and not by the hand. Many will say to me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works?” Then will I profess unto them, “I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” If we are humble in heart, contrite, penitential, self-renouncing, always wishing and desiring to be better, Christ will accept this purpose as an accomplished fact, and astound us by the revelation of his rewards.

Understand what kind of Teacher we have now come upon. This is terrible preaching which we read in our text to-day. It is a judgment upon the Preacher if it be not a vindication. He must keep up to his own standard. Having challenged the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, he must show a better. Having demanded purity of heart, he must show it, or endeavour to show it. Having scorned as a final consummation all the moralities that everyone before him taught, he must be faithful to the new and larger doctrine. If not, he opens his heart to all the assaults of even the least ingenious of his foes. He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, his robe was seamless, no man could charge him with violating his own doctrine—he was the only preacher that lived his sermons, in him alone was perfect, absolute consistency. What he looks for from us is a humble, daily, loving endeavour to follow him. That is all we can claim, and we claim it with most bated breath.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we cannot mistake thy word, it is as fire and it is as music, it is as the sound of a mighty wind from heaven—there is none like it ; our hearts know thy voice, and when we follow thy word thy blessing upon us is like a great wave. Thou hast written for us thy book, thou hast given unto us thy Holy Spirit for its interpretation and for the enlightenment of our mind ; enable us to receive thy book, not as the word of man, but as the express deliverance and message of heaven. Save us from all the reading of the letter, that does not see into the meaning of the infinite Spirit, bring us into sympathy with thine own purpose whilst we read thy wondrous words. We long to hear thy voice, it will soothe us, it will give us courage, it will answer every rising inquiry and repel every urgent temptation. Let thy voice fill the hearing of our soul to-day and make us glad with the music of heaven.

Give us release from the anxieties and torments of a worldly life ; lift us above the cares and distresses incident to an earthly pilgrimage, and bring us into thine inner chamber, where our hearts shall see the radiance of thy face, and our life shall be lifted up into a new and immortal hope. Thou hast been with us in the valley of the week, and even in the darkness we have seen where the flowers were, and our hands have been filled with their beauty. Thou hast caused us to pass over stony places, yet even in the rock hast thou found a river of water, so that we have not died in the wilderness by reason of thirst. Where the water has been bitter thou hast given us a plant to heal its bitterness, thou hast turned upon us an eye brighter than the morning, and upon our enemies thou hast turned a cloud darker than the night. Because of thy great goodness we are here this day, living, with hearts uplifted heavenward, with a great desire going out after thyself that our souls may be completed in perfection and soothed with peace.

Hear us whilst we confess our sin, and whilst we mourn our iniquity. Let thy forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our one Priest and only Saviour, be greater than all our guilt. When we sin most, we most need him, for he is the Saviour of the world and the Redeemer of those that are in bondage. Bring us all round his cross, and high above all the writing of those who slew him may we see the superscription traced by thine own hand, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

We put ourselves into thine hands for guidance, direction, sustenance, and all things needful. We shall die to-morrow, but to die is to live, if so be we die unto the Lord. Our days are thinning down, so much so that we see through the remainder of them and behold the tomb at the other end. Yet, though our days be few, we would live them as industrious servants, being found diligent and

faithful, stooping down to our work with a hearty good will, and doing it all in the strength and fear and hope of God.

We commend one another with mutual love to thy gentle care. Carry our sick ones in thy great arms, press our little ones to thine infinite heart, kiss the tears of our sorrow from our reddened cheek, and give us a time of sunshine, when the storm has spent itself upon our poor life. Help every man who wishes to do better, to realize this solemn hope, to every man who would lift himself up by thy grace and strength so as to catch the full shining of thy light, give grace, strength, comfort, and renewal of confidence every day. If any heart be set upon evil and any hand be trying to find what mischief it can work, the Lord confound the counsel of those who are wrong, and overturn the purpose of those who know not and fear not thy name.

Thy word awaits us, may we await its deliverance, may it come to us with great power and breadth, great simplicity and unction—may every heart throw open its gates to give right loving welcome to the kingdom of Christ. The Lord direct us in everything, individually, congregationally, socially, and nationally. Give righteousness and a spirit of mercy and judgment to all who are in high places. God save the Queen, and add many unto the days of her life; the Lord himself rule the nation and make us glad under his sovereignty. Send light and truth, purity and peace all over the world, and make the whole earth thy sanctuary, thou who didst redeem it with blood.

Hear us in these our uttered prayers, and as for the desires we may not and cannot speak, read them every one, as they lie unuttered in the heart. Wherein they point towards truth and better life and penitence and nobler purpose, thou wilt give them infinite answers of satisfaction and peace. Amen.

Matthew v. 33-48.

33. Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths :

34. But I say unto you, Swear not at all ; neither by heaven ; for it is God's throne :

35. Nor by the earth ; for it is his footstool : neither by Jerusalem ; for it is the city of the great King.

36. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

37. But let your communication be, Yea, yea ; Nay, nay : for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

38. Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth :

39. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil : but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

40. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

41. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

42. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

43. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

44. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you ;

45. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven : for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye ? do not even the publicans the same ?

47. And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others ; do not even the publicans so ?

48. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

THE PRACTICAL BEATITUDES.

WE had some difficulty in understanding the beatitudes, the music seemed to be too exquisite and refined for the rough instruments at our disposal. We hastened over them, rather than deliberately read them. As your teacher, I had a purpose in this ; I knew that the beatitudes would all come up again in practical form. Who can understand abstract and purely spiritual truth ? But that which is impossible from one point of view may be rendered comparatively easy from another. Jesus Christ now proceeds to give examples upon what we might call the black board. When he said, looking it whilst he did say it, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," we did not understand the meaning of the unfathomable doctrine. When he said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," we thought he was speaking of himself, or of strangers, for we had never come within the sacred lines described by that simple, yet immeasurable, word, meekness. Now he is proceeding from doctrine to exhortation, and you will find under his exhortations the whole set of the beatitudes : he is giving you now to drink out of the wells he dug when he laid down the doctrine.

I cannot tell what he means by purity of heart, so he approaches my dull understanding with this practical direction—Do not be angry with your brother without a cause, do not call your brother by contemptuous names, do not describe any man wilfully and maliciously as a fool. I think these are easy exhortations, and when I begin to give them incarnation in my life I find they are supreme difficulties ; I have not motive force in me enough to carry this tremendous engine along. Now I take him aside and say privately in the house, "I know now something of what you

meant when you said, Blessed are the pure in heart." "Yes," he replies, "that was my purpose, and if your heart be not right you will never be able to do the apparently simple duties which I have now indicated. Unless there be pureness of heart there will be pollution of lips, unless there be rightness of heart there will be hidden and baleful fire in the spirit, and it will express itself in contempt and malice, and harshness and cruelty." So now that he comes into practical particulars, I find that they balance the spiritual doctrine which I could not understand. But I will try to do the duty—I shall be lead back into the doctrine, and be made to feel that I cannot work with the hand except it express the inspiration of a cleansed heart.

So when he says to me, "If a man smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also;" when I ask, "How is this to be done?" he says, "Recall the beatitudes." I then endeavour to remember what he said in the spiritual part of his discourse, and this sweet word returns to my memory—"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." When I heard that sentence the first time I dismissed it as a very beautiful conception, a high and delicate theory, written in clouds and illustrated with sunset colours; but now that it comes down to me in a practical form, I find it was no cloudy revelation, no mere touch of intellectual beauty, no flash of the moral imagination, but something sound, honest, vital, divine. So it is no use telling a man to turn the other cheek to the man who has smitten him if he has not first turned his heart towards meekness. You cannot put on meekness except as you put on paint that can be washed off. If you have not the meek heart, you cannot do the meek deed. Do not play at meekness, do not simulate meekness; let us hide ourselves with Christ, who is meek and lowly in heart, then we shall be exactly what he meant when he told us that when we were smitten on one cheek we had to turn the other also. Throughout the whole of these practical exhortations you will find that he is reducing the beatitudes or spiritual doctrines to spiritual form and expression.

Let us now go a little into detail to establish this with some breadth of illustration. "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths." That is, you have heard it

laid down broadly that you are not to commit perjury : having taken a vow, you must be faithful to it ; having uttered your oath, you must carefully and deliberately reduce it to practice. It must not be made a dead letter, it must not be evaded, it must not be inverted, there must be no perjury or false-swearing or foregoing of the most sacred oaths of life : but I say unto you, that that is a very poor advancement in the right direction. So far as it goes it is right enough, but go forward, follow me, so as to relieve yourself from the necessity of ever swearing at all. That is to say, let your heart be so sincere that your speech must be simple ; cultivate that state of heart in the sight of God which naturally and necessarily, by virtue of the divine compulsion, expresses itself in simple, transparent, and beauteous sincerity and simplicity.

I do not understand the Saviour as forbidding what is known as judicial oath-taking or swearing. He always recognised certain necessities of the time, and he adapted his revelation from the beginning to the hardness of the hearts of those whom he had to instruct. But he was bound to point to the ultimate line he set up of ideal conversation. It is his purpose to make us so like himself that we cannot but speak exactly what is true. Consider the monstrosity of any man speaking only what is true because he has *sworn* to do it. That man is a liar. In his very nature and blood he is false, if he will only speak that which is true simply on the ground that he has taken an oath to do it. There can be no formal truthfulness : sincerity is a condition of heart ; it is not the result of a mechanical contrivance coming out of the kissing a certain book under a certain adjuration. Jesus Christ therefore educates the race up to the point of not needing to swear or affirm or declare, with unusual emphasis. He would have our very breathing to be the expression of our hearts' condition, so that if a man said Yea, he meant that, and that only : if he said Nay, there was no mental reservation, no subtle and unexpressed equivocation of meaning, no intention, deep down in the heart, to take advantage of a certain set of terms under a certain set of circumstances—that is the deep and glorious meaning of the Son of God. Be so right within as to be incapable of uttering one word that is not pure as light and as fire. It is to that high result he would bring us. We are

dull scholars, and the teacher has yet an infinite work before him.

Jesus Christ then addressed himself to certain little trickeries that were in custom amongst the people. He told them not to swear by heaven, nor by earth, nor by Jerusalem, nor by the head. Why did he go into this detail? Because, such was the corruption of his age, that there were great and learned men who laid it down as right to break any oath in which you could not find, in so many letters, the name Jehovah. There was one great man in history who openly avowed that he felt himself to be at liberty to break any oath in which he did not expressly use the word *God*. If the word *God* had passed his lips he felt himself bound in honour to fulfil his oath, but if he swore by heaven, by the altar, by the queen, by his hair, by his palace, he did but gather so much straw as he could cast into the fire of his passion and burn when he pleased. Jesus Christ, with that marvellous comprehensiveness of teaching which is characteristic of his school, proceeds to show that, though you may not have the name of God in your oath, whatever you touch is sacred and has God in it. "Swear not by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is his city; nor by thine head, for he fashioned it and clothed it, and thou canst not make one hair white or black." So he delivered the term God from its consisting of so many letters and syllables, and showed that the whole universe was alive with God, and that to swear by a stone was to invoke the Creator that formed it. To be under such a Teacher is an inspiration, to hear such a man is to expose yourself to the mountain breeze or a whiff of ocean air full of life and giving life.

Take the next particular. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the one cheek turn to him the other also, and if any man shall sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And if any man compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." We all know to what absurdities and iniquities a merely literal acceptance of those words would lead. You nibble at the meaning of Christ when you begin to think that you see it all in these bare words, as they would be understood by the unen-

lightened and unspiritual mind. What is Jesus Christ teaching here? He is teaching the great principle of forbearance or long-suffering. He quells all human passion, and sets upon human revenge the seal of his displeasure. Revenge is not to enter into our thoughts. As to self-protection it is written in our nature; it is not a debased instinct, it was in the original Adam, the divinely-shaped and divinely-inspired man, and the very first word spoken to the man constituted an appeal to this instinct, "Take care; in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. Protect thyself." It cannot be taken out of our manhood, this instinct of self-preservation; it can be sanctified, moderated, ennobled, and this is what Christ meant it to be. I may smite in judgment or I may smite in revenge, but the individual man who is injured cannot smite in judgment. I smite in temper—that is the very thing forbidden. We caution a man against taking the law into his own hands—that is exactly what Jesus Christ means in this direction. You ought not to have taken the law into your own hands—Why? Because you were only an individual and the individual is incomplete. What, then, should I have done? You should have referred it to the complete man. What is his name? *Society*. Society will lay its terrific hand upon the man that smote you. You are only a part and not a whole, a fraction and not an integer. The judge, when he sits upon the bench and condemns a fellow-creature to penal servitude for life, is not an individual, he is the embodiment of Society, the representative of the latest civilization of his time and land. If you, being smitten on one cheek, turn round and smite the man who smote you, you may both be taken before the judge. Rather than that, turn to him the other also. Leave your defence and his punishment in the hands of the *social* man, the aggregate humanity, the judge.

This is exactly what Christ did himself. Christ did not personally resist evil. He exemplified the very doctrine now being explained. Personally, when he was reviled, he reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not; he gave his back to the smiters and his cheeks to them that pluck off the hair. But as Judge, not the Jesus of Nazareth, but the Son of Man, he shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, he shall divide the nations and open hell under the feet of those that despised him. We believe that thou wilt come to be our Judge.

Every eye shall see him, they that pierced him shall mourn because of him, those whose hands are wettest and reddest with human blood shall seek mercy of the rocks and pity of the mountains, for the wrath of his face shall scourge them like the fire that awaits their coming. Resist not evil, do not take the law into your own hands; personally be meek, forbearing, long-suffering, show that the spirit of revenge has no place in you, show that you would rather suffer wrong than do wrong; take the larger view, be gentle, hopeful, noble, and as to your sufferings, there is an organised anger that shall burn the adversary, there is a judicial scourge that shall cut to his bone. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord," and he repays through organised society, through enlightened and established civilization, and by a thousand ministries which we can neither name nor measure.

"And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." This refers to the system of forced courierships. In ancient times and oriental lands, messages were delivered by couriers, and persons were required to show the way to strangers. If you were lost upon a mountain or in a valley, it was part of your right to *insist* upon any person who was in the neighbourhood to go with you part of the road, to help you out of your difficulty. Persons could be *compelled* to bear messages and letters. One Simon, a Cyrenian, was compelled to bear the cross. Who would not carry that cross every mile he has yet to walk? The Saviour said, "If a man compel you to go a mile with him to show him the road, go two rather than not go at all. Show a cheerful disposition under the pressure, let your philanthropy absorb your convenience."

"Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away." We all know that society would be wrecked in a very short time if this rule were to be literally applied. In fact it bears upon its face the proof that it does not admit of application in the way which the mere literalist would expect. It is too broad to mean anything as a mere letter, it is, as the lawyers say, void by generality. It means so much as to mean nothing. And yet it must have some profound signification? Certainly. Where shall we find that signification?

In God's own government, just as we find the explanation of non-resistance in Christ's own conduct. God does not do this himself, as the literalist would interpret it. He does it in the nobler and larger way which is of no use to the mere devotee of the letter. Let me explain. I ask God to give me what I mention to him, yet he turns away. Then he tells me to give to the man that asketh of me. I must find the meaning of these words in the course of his own action. I would borrow of God, and yet he turns away from my cry. He judges what is best for me, what is good for me: he says "No" to many a prayer; many a desire of mine that I have sent out towards the heavens has fallen back upon the door-sill like a wounded bird. I know now what Christ means: he teaches me clemency, sympathy, he develops in me an interest in human affairs, he saves me from absurdity and folly and recklessness and from putting myself into the very position in which I should have gone to repeat the doctrine he lays down, and thus keep up a system and action of absurd borrowing, now one man having it, and now another, and so passing it between themselves through every hour of the day.

If you want to find the meaning of these sweet words, you can easily find it. Do not try to discover it in the letter. Whenever you are clement, sympathetic, large-hearted, kind-handed, you are going in the direction of the meaning of this passage. Jesus is not laying down little laws and small maxims, he is developing infinite principles which can be applied in every climate, and which can embody themselves under all the various circumstances which make up all the changefulness of human life.

That I am right in seeking the explanation of the whole doctrine in myself and in God is proved by what Jesus Christ immediately adds, "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven," that you may do in your degree as he does upon an infinite scale. He does not answer every petition, he turns away from some requests, he knows that difficulty has a place in the discipline and sanctification of life, and he uses the rod as sometimes the only admissible lesson. I would be taught by him, I would be like him, I would err, as we sometimes say, on the liberal side rather than on the ungenerous. I would rather be taken in than take in any human creature, I would rather try to find the means

of healing a man than sourly turn away from his distressed face and his faltering voice. If that be my disposition of heart, I am in the school of Christ.

But take these exhortations as you like, you cannot give their application, without you have help from heaven. It is not in man that liveth to work out this sublime morality, it is not in the human heart as at present existing to find room for these divinities. He who made the heart must disinfect it, cleanse it, enlarge it to give hospitality to such guests.

NOTE.

"The thing that seems to have struck the listeners most, was the calm, unhesitating, authoritative tone in which the whole was uttered. 'They were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.' Here is One who comes forth from none of the great schools,—who has sat at the feet of none of the great masters,—who uses no book language,—who appeals to no authority but his own,—a young untaught Nazarene; and yet he takes it upon him to pronounce with the utmost confidence as to who the truly blessed are, and reckons among them those who were to be railed at and persecuted for his sake. . . .

"In consequence of the simplicity, purity, and elevation of the moral precepts which it contains, and still more, perhaps, because of none of the peculiar doctrines as to the person, character, office, and work of Christ as the Mediator being found in it, this Sermon on the Mount has been greedily seized upon and highly extolled by many as the true epitome of Christianity—as Christ's own gospel coming from his own lips. But it is far less difficult for us to discern the reasons why the truths of the incarnation and the propitiatory sacrifice were not at this time and to that audience alluded to or dwelt upon by Jesus, than it is for any who would reduce him to the level of a mere moral legislator to account for the position which, even when enunciating the simplest moral precepts, he assumed—for the tone of authority in which he speaks. Dimly, indeed, through this Sermon on the Mount does the Jesus of the Cross appear, but the Jesus of the Throne is here, and once that we have learned from other after-teachings of himself and his Apostles to know, and love, and trust in him as our great High Priest, who has bought us with his blood, it will be the habit and delight of every true and faithful follower of his to take up and dwell upon that wonderful discourse, in which more clearly and fully than in any other words of human speech, the very spirit and essence of a humble child-like faith in God, and the lofty ideal of a perfect, a heavenly morality, is unfolded and enforced."—*Our Lord's Life on Earth*, by DR. HANNA.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we would hide ourselves under the wings of thy mercy. We dare not look at thy law, for we have broken it, nor at thy righteousness, for it is now unto us as a two-edged sword ; but thou hast permitted us to look at thy mercy. Thine eternal pity, those tears of thine that bid us silent but large welcome to all the love of thine heart. God be merciful unto us sinners. We have done our alms, and men have seen the doing of them ; we have prayed, and behold our prayers have fallen back unheard, unanswered. We have fasted, that we might draw attention to the dejection of our face. God be merciful unto us sinners. We have done the things we ought not to have done, we have left undone the things that we ought to have done ; we pierce ourselves with many accusations, we cannot spare the infliction of bitter self-reproach, we mourn, we repent, we bow down ourselves before thee in utterest humiliation, no voice have we of self-defence. God be merciful unto us sinners. Our standard has been short, our balances have been unequal, our purposes have been double, our words have had one meaning to others and another meaning to ourselves ; we have lied without speaking, by smiling, by action, by hint. God be merciful unto us sinners, make us clean of heart, clean in the spirit, right in our motive, holy within ; then shall our life be a sacred sacrifice, thou wilt receive it daily in thy heavenly places, as a well-meaning offering of the soul.

We bless thee for all thy patient care, thy long-suffering, thy tender mercy. Thou hast taken care of us, as if we were of consequence to thee ; thou hast numbered the hairs of our heads, as if thou hadst not to count the innumerable planets, and set the stars in their places. Thou hast hidden us in the hollow of thine hand, and drawn us very near to thine heart, and many a message of tenderest love hast thou addressed to us in our low estate. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gifts. Thou hast given us thine only-begotten Son, Son of Mary, Son of Man, Son of God, Lamb of God, Saviour of the world, whose name gathers into itself all music, and comes down upon our sin and woe like the very gospel of thine heart. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Thou hast not left thyself without witness in our hearts. Thou hast given unto us thy Holy Spirit to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come ; to purify us as with flame, to illuminate our minds as with the very light of thy throne, to teach us the meaning of thy truth, and to help us to apply it to our varied necessities. What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us ? Truly we can render nothing in return, but it shall be well with us if with our hearts and lips we can bless thee for all thy love.

Thou art still in the world, thou hast not withdrawn thy rule from the sons of men, still the horn of thine anointed doth bud, and still thou givest unto him a lamp that shall be a perpetual light. Thou liftest up the crushed truth, and thou givest renewed beauty to graces that have been trampled upon by heedless or cruel feet. The Lord reigneth, his throne is in the heavens, and his sceptre is stretched out over all. We know not what we do : we cannot tell what a day may bring forth ; we hide ourselves in the infinitude of thy love ; we put our whole life into thy care : we would expend it in thy service, we would yield it to thy glory.

Wherein any heart is heavily burdened to-day, let special messages of grace be sent to it from heaven. Wherein the light of any house has been suddenly put out, O thou, who hast all the lamps of the universe, do thou set a new light to chase away the sudden and heavy darkness. Where great tears of woe are starting from the eyes, because of bereavement, bitter disappointment, brokenness of heart because of family trouble, the Lord's own hand touch those tears and dry them, for our hands cannot touch a grief so great and heavy. Wherein our purposes are right, do thou prosper them ; wherein they are wrong or mistaken, do thou confound them. We put our life again and again, day by day, with every waking and every sleep, into thine hand ; thou didst give it, and it shall all be thine.

Send thy word out to those who are not with us to-day, to those who are shut up in solitude in the sick chamber, suffering or waiting upon others ; be with those who are called upon suddenly to travel and leave us for a while, with those in trouble on the sea, with weary hearts too tired to pray, with those to whom life has become a great despair. The Lord lift the great cross higher, and let it burn with all the fire of his love, and throw out its heat so that the coldest heart may feel it and the most desponding life may answer its warming ray.

The Lord's light be held above his word, and the Lord's light spring out of his word, that in the light coming from heaven and springing from the written page we may see God's meaning, and give it loving welcome to our mind and heart. Amen.

Matthew vi. 1-18.

1. Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them : otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

2. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

3. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth :

4. That thine alms may be in secret : and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

5. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are : for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do : for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8. Be not ye therefore like unto them : for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9. After this manner therefore pray ye : Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

10. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

11. Give us this day our daily bread.

12. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil : for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

14. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you :

15. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

16. Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance : for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

17. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face ;

18. That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret : and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

TRUE ALMSDOING.

“**W**HEN thou doest thine alms do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets.” The boxes in the temple treasury were shaped like trumpets. Jesus Christ said, “Do not make a trumpet of the box : it looks like one, but do not use it for the purpose of calling attention to what you are about to put into it.” It is strange how we may pervert the most exquisite beauty, and turn it to false uses, forms, and colours, which God meant to lead us to higher thought and finer feeling. It is a box for the reception of secret alms, not a trumpet for sounding for the purpose of calling public attention to what is about to be done. Use everything for its right purpose, and beware of perversion ; do not say you got the suggestion from the thing itself—it was never meant to convey such a suggestion, it was meant for a totally different purpose. He is the honest man, as well as the wise, who seizes the definite intention of Providence, and works along that line without putting upon it glosses and twists and perversions of his own.

“When thou doest thine alms.” Literally, and this may surprise some of you, when thou doest thy righteousness. In the fifth

chapter and the twentieth verse, which we have already expounded, we read, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." What a different meaning is infused into the sentence now, when we replace the word *alms* with the word *righteousness*. I thought almsgiving was a matter of pity, transient emotion, kindly feeling. It is more than that: under all the flowers of the earth are the great ribs of rocks, without which the earth could not cohere and exist. I understood that when I gave alms I was displaying pity, kind feeling, nice sentiment, and that I was drawing attention to myself as a man of peculiarly good nature and most amiable sensibility. Nothing of the kind. It is *right* to give: when the strong man helps the weak, he is not showing the beauties of amiability, or indulging a merely transient emotion, it is not a specimen of social chivalry, it comes out of the righteousness of God, the very law of right. If he had done anything else, he would have been guilty before God of a violation of the spirit of *righteousness*.

When you took the dear little child off the streets and gave it a chair at your table, it was not an action that could be covered with some such words as pity, kindness, sympathy, gentleness, and amiability. All these words themselves are used oftentimes with too narrow a meaning. If our actions do not go back to the rock of righteousness, then they will be, however beautiful in their immediate manifestation, transient in their duration. They will be forgotten as dreams are forgotten in the light. On the other hand, only let us get the notion that to help a man, a child, a woman, to give alms to poverty, to do any deed of charity, is a right thing, and then see how our life becomes grand in solemnity, how it founds itself on the immutable and the complete, and how we cease to be moved by caprice and impulse that cannot be calculated and controlled, and become the servants of a great law, the apostles of an infinite and beneficent righteousness.

This almsgiving is to be done, I observe, in the sight of God. Then is God always looking? So the great Master teaches us. "Your Father which is in secret, your Father which seeth in secret, your Father who is always looking on." What, am I ever in the great Taskmaster's eye? Does that eye never close in slumber? Is there not one moment when it tires of looking?

In that moment I might snatch his sceptre and dispute his sovereignty. But the Holy One of Israel slumbereth not nor sleepeth: the darkness and the light are both alike unto him. That which is spoken in the ear he hears in thunder in heaven. This gives me a very solemn and grand view of life.

Why, then, many of our processes in the matter of almsgiving must be given up. Sometimes men meet and challenge one another to do good. If it is done with modesty all but infinite, it is permissible. It is a dangerous trick. "I will give fifty pounds if you will give fifty pounds," says a man who imagines he is going to do something great. If it is a mere matter of taste, so far as any matter can be so limited the challenge is allowable, but if it relate to the higher charities, to consecration, to the outgoing and uplifting and offering of the heart to God, do not mention what you are going to do, ask not what other people are going to do. Beware of that most mischievous sophism, which says, "I am only waiting to see what others do." Stand before God, calculate the whole case in his presence, soliloquise in his hearing, have but one auditor, and that your Father which heareth in secret, and then do whatever is right, according to your then sanctified conviction, and God will do the rest.

Compulsion is not to enter into almsgiving, except self-compulsion, the best of all. If you compel me to do an alms or to give a gift, I will undo it if I can, when you are not looking, but if I am compelled by ministries within to do an alms, I do it with my love. I could not withdraw it, it is given to God in holy sacrifice and grateful prayer. In this matter of religion there ought to be no compulsion at all, except the compulsion of love. That love needs continual warming. It is amazing how soon our affections become cooled by the chilling winds of the earth. So we must hasten to the sanctuary, and into the inner spirit of the divine word, we must climb the sacred eminence on which stands the one cross, out of which all other crosses are cut, and so must we renew the fire of our love. For love in the Church is nothing if it be not a constant flame. Let us beware of sudden outbreaks of fire. If they be beside the continual burnt-offering, they are good, but the burnt-offering itself must be steady, continual, daily, and if now and again the flame shoot heaven-high, so be it, but the steady glow must never fail.

We are to see the divine in the human in this giving of alms. When we give something to a little poor child, to whom do we give it, if our motive is right and pure? We give it to Christ. That is his own interpretation of my action, he astounds me by its vastness and brightness. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat." O hungry one, Christ is suffering the pang that gives thee pain. In all our affliction he is afflicted. Whenever a hand of righteous charity is put out to alleviate our distresses, he feels the tingling of it in his own pierced palm, and writes it, to be spoken of another day.

The hypocrites are not so, the actors are of another temper: their act is the same as the right act, but it is done from the wrong motive, and therefore it has no value in the sight of heaven. It is like a prayer that paints itself on the ceiling, not like a living bird, loosened from the secret heart and sent out to find its invisible nest in heaven.

Jesus Christ, then, is very deep in teaching. He gets down to the fundamental line, and yet in doing so there is a marvellous satire in his tone. Speaking about the actors or hypocrites he says, "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." They get what they seek; they seek applause, they get it for the moment and it dies away, and they are left with the void air. They get their heaven, an empty place, a silent chamber, a heaven they would gladly part with; when you have received your applause for your almsgiving that is all you will get, if you did it from a wrong motive. You will hear a clapping of hands and a stamping of feet, and an uproarious "Huzza!" for a second or two, and then, gone; and when it is gone your heaven has vanished. As to the after work, who can tell what that may be when the mask is taken from the hypocrite's face, when the paint is washed from his countenance and he stands out in the ghastliness of his true meaning? My soul, enter not thou into such a secret.

You will find as you proceed with your lesson that Jesus Christ applies the same principle to everything he now deals with. The fire is the same, he does not change the test, his chemistry is not fickle, throughout the whole he is seeking for purity of heart, and throughout the whole he shows how the trick of the hand may be made momentarily to represent purity of heart and purpose. Thus

with regard to prayer. "When thou prayest thou shalt not be as the actors, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." Right things may be done in a wrong way, and so may lose their value. It is right to give, right to pray, right to fast, but they may all be done in a wrong way.

We do not understand in England what is meant by these words, "long prayers, vain repetitions, and much speaking," though sometimes we say a prayer is long if it went, say, to the length of ten minutes, or fifteen, or twenty; if to half-an-hour, we describe it as very long and tedious; but that was not the measure indicated by the words of Jesus Christ. It had come to be in his time a matter of settled conviction among certain people, to whom he now definitely refers, that if they only prayed times enough, kept on saying the same things over and over again, they would purchase heaven as a matter of right, as you purchase an article by laying down a certain money value for it on the counter. The article is yours, it is not a gift of the original proprietor, it has passed on to you as having value received on the part of the man who first held it. So among the hypocrites and the actors, they thought that if they read a certain document called the Sch'ma—if they read that over and over again, and kept at it, and made a question of regular mechanical repetition of it, by a certain turn of the wheel they would be able to claim heaven as men claim a field for which they have paid the price. Jesus Christ, having reference to this mechanical piety, said, "That is a vital mistake on their part; they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him." Beware of vain repetition: in other words, beware of a mechanical piety. No prayer is long that is prayed with the heart: as long as the heart can talk the prayer is very brief—let that be the measure and standard of our long and much praying. Do not measure your prayers by minutes, but by necessities. Sometimes we have no influence with the King. He appears to have deafened himself against us or to have turned into stone at our approach, and our prayers and utterances are lost upon him as rain upon the barren rock. Sometimes we can talk the whole day with him, we cannot tell where the growing numbers of our praise will end, our heart is enlarged in great and free

utterance, and then we enter into the mystery of communion ; not asking, begging, soliciting, wanting more and more like the horse-leech, but talking out to him as the dews go up to the morning sun. When you have such opportunities, make the most of them, and do not let the words, "vain repetitions and much speaking," come into your minds as temptations. One sentence may be much speaking, and is so, if it be not meant. A day's long talk, a night's long communion, will be but too short, if you see the King as it were face to face.

Thus, again, Jesus Christ brings us to the point—"Blessed are the pure in heart." Jesus Christ came to set purity of heart in opposition to the formalism and corruption of his day. He found that evil hands had written lies and blasphemies upon every beam in the Temple, he found that the windows that ought to have looked heavenward had been cobwebbed with traditions, and curtained and screened so as to conceal the iniquity which was wrought behind them. So, with glowing ardour, burning like an oven, he cleansed the desecrated house, and relighted its shaded chambers with the very glory of heaven, called back the exiled and dishonoured angels of purity, mercy, meekness, peace, and he banished the ghouls of selfishness, oppression, cruelty, and strife. He lifted, peasant's son though he was, an arm of thunder and shattered the vile creations that were set up to mock the holiness of God.

"What think ye of Christ?" A grand Teacher. He made no beck and bow to his age, saying, "If you please, will you be good enough to hear me?" He spoke the eternal word, and there was something in the human heart that said, "This is he of whom Moses and the prophets did write." You know the true voice when you hear it ; there is a spirit in man and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding.

The Saviour then proceeds to apply the same principle to the matter of fasting. He did not find fault with fasting as a religious ordinance, but he said, in effect, "This religious observance has been perverted like prayer and almsgiving ; now you must not disfigure your face, and so call attention to the fact that you are fasting ; you must fast in your heart, it must be the soul that fasts. Is not this the fast that I have chosen to undo heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, to speak for the dumb, and be feet and hands to them that are lame and helpless?" He did not find

fault with the words, *almsgiving, prayer, fasting*, but he carried them up to their highest definitions. We have degraded every term we have ever used. In our Saviour's time the hypocrites or actors used to spread ashes upon their heads literally, and used to tear their garments and make their faces the very picture and exemplification of hunger and dejection, and they used to walk up and down the streets, saying by these actions, "Look at us, how pious we are, how observant of the law; see to what extreme lengths we carry our devotion." Christ looked at them, and his eyes flashed fire on them, and he said, "Hypocrites, actors, masked men, verily I say unto you, you have your reward. You put out your hand to catch a gilded bubble, you seize it with greedy fingers and it melts and dies."

This matter of fasting was carried so far that one historian tells us it was mimicked and mocked in the Roman theatre. At one play, the audience being seated and in expectation of the performance, a camel was led across the stage, and that camel was in such a lean and miserable condition, looking so utterly dejected and forsaken, that voices called out, "What is the matter with the camel?" and the dramatic answer was, "This is fasting-time amongst the Jews, and the camel has been observing the fast." This is what our canting impiety always comes to; it is the tempting, snivelling hypocrite that is put upon the boards of our novels, and not the earnest and loving and true soul. When I come upon any character in a novel or romance that is meant to typify the ministry of the day or the Christian spirit of the day, I give the artist credit for endeavouring to set forth a hypocrisy and not a reality. I do not look even upon those Roman pagans as traducing a grand religious consecration, but as mimicking and mocking and bitterly taunting men who had forsaken the spirit of their religion, and had perverted and prostituted the letter to the most unworthy purposes. If any man shall attempt to travesty that which is real, true, pure, divine, the thick end of the beam shall fall upon his own head in due time. As to those who take delight in caricaturing things that are counterfeit and unfit and unworthy—you have a ministry in life, and I wish you success in the discharge of your grave and responsible function.

"What think ye of Christ?" There is a tone of reality about this Man's teaching. Is his ministry vital, is he working in the

right direction, is this the reforming ministry which all ages need? Sometimes we say that our ministers preach to the times—in doing so they follow the example of their Lord and Master. If Christ were living now he would speak to the times: he would not speak to some dumb ages, he would speak to the men who are living around him, working all kinds of mischief, and having within them counsels and purposes unworthy alike of their manhood and of the divine vocation that is in all human life. I cannot imagine Jesus Christ coming to read something to us of an abstract kind. He would now and again lay down great breadths of noble doctrine, but he would be swiftly out in the age again. You would find him in the market-place, you would find him in the broad thoroughfares, you would find him where merchants most do congregate, you would find him in all the activities of life, trying everything by the fire of heaven. He lived in a time of corruption, he never shut his mouth concerning it. He saw a kingdom perverted and he lifted up his voice in condemnation of it. He told the painted actors, the dressed coxcombs of his day, that they had not yet crossed the threshold of the kingdom which they pretended to hold in personal custody, and then, having cursed the corruption of his day as no other man had the power to do, he turned round, and with ineffable blessing, and with most tender speech, he spake to the weary and the heavy-laden, and the sad-hearted, to the woman that was a sinner, and to the little child brought for his blessing. And then last of all he poured out his soul unto death. A mistake—does any whisper such a suggestion? Looking at the life that preceded it, at the thunder and lightning of the denunciation of all wrong that went before it, at the beatitudes and the gospels poured out upon those whose hearts were broken and whose lives were weary—that death was the only fit conclusion; it belonged to the antecedent mistake, it set forth in the most vivid and graphic colours what had been indicated in hasty sketches in every day's beneficent ministry.

He died, he rose again, he lives, he expects us, he is preparing a place for us, and when he prepares, what will the result be? I have seen his earth, his flowers, his summers, his mornings—I have seen his sun, I have seen some of his innumerable stars. He will outdo it all, for he will prepare, not to be worthy of me, but to be worthy of himself.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we have read of thy care of our life, and without reading it in a book we know it well, for day by day thou art at our right hand, thou dost satisfy our mouth with good things, thou dost renew our youth like the eagle's, our strength is returned to us after its expenditure, thou dost keep our eyes from tears, our feet from falling, and our soul from death. Thou hast shown unto us great and wonderful things as we have come along the pathway of life ; we have begun to pray where we expected to die ; thou hast planted a tree beside the bitter lake, and made its water sweet with the branches thereof ; thou hast planted flowers upon the tomb ; thou hast dried tears which no human hand of sympathy or tenderness could reach ; and, when the grief was keenest and the darkness most burdensome, then was the star the brightest and in the cold wind there were voices of hope.

We bless thee for all thy tender care, thy long-continued patience ; thou dost watch over each of us as if he were an only child. Behold there is no measure to the Lord's mercy, and his compassions fail not. We bless thee for thy great Book, so full of music and truth and beauty ; touching us at every point of our life, speaking to us the one word we most need, comforting us with infinite solaces, opening the prospect beyond the horizon of time, and enabling us to see into the rest and the joyous service of heaven.

We give ourselves into thy keeping ; we would have no will but thine ; we would not attempt to open any door but with thy key. Thou hast been our God and our Helper, and in thy love do we rest as in an inviolable defence. Show us more of thyself ; fill our whole life with light, may our eye be single, that our whole body may be lighted with the flame of thy glory. May our whole life, body, soul, and spirit, be a daily sacrifice on the sacred altar ; may our whole desire rise up before thee in a solemn and all-believing prayer.

We thank thee for thine house ; we bless thee that no storm can overtake us hidden in the sanctuary of God. The Lord's blessing be in every heart, the Lord's light shine upon every eye, and, as for our whole life, we open it now and give thee all the hospitality of our love. Come, abide with us, and in the breaking of our bread we shall see great revelations of heaven.

We commend one another to thy tender care. The Lord help every man, woman, child, now bent in prayer. Thou knowest the secret desire of each heart, the solemn purpose of each life : thou knowest the sting that pierces the heart, the burden too heavy for mortal strength, the great fear that deepens into dejection, and threatens to become a mortal injury. Thou knowest our family life, our commercial difficulties, and our whole estate is known to thee. The Lord undertake for every one of us according to the heart's necessity, and multiply unto us his grace, so that beyond all our want there may be an overflow of divine love.

We bless thee again and again, in never-ending hymn and psalm, for the gift of thine only-begotten and well-beloved Son. We know Jesus Christ, we have heard his words, we have touched the hem of his garment, we have seen the outflowing of his sacred blood : we remember that his cross was set up for us, and in the agony of our contrition he is our only hope. God be merciful unto us sinners : give us assurance of daily pardon, and strengthen our confidence in every divine promise : then shall our life be quiet and bright, and strong and good. Hear us when we sing thy praises, hear the desires we cannot put into words, see the falling of secret tears on account of secret sin, and help us one and all with the unfailing strength of thine infinite grace to live before thee in all faith, in all affection, and in pure desire to know and do thy blessed will.—Amen.

Matthew vi. 19-34.

19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal :

20. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal :

21. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

22. The light of the body is the eye : if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !

24. No man can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

25. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ?

26. Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ?

27. Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature ?

28. And why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin :

29. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ?

31. Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? or, What shall we drink ? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed ?

32. (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek :) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34. Take therefore no thought for the morrow : for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

SECULAR ANXIETY.

IN this passage there is, first, an *exhortation*, and, secondly, a *reason* for it. The exhortation is, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth: lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." The reason is, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." You will never understand the exhortation till you understand the reason given for it. Vain is all criticism upon the words, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." It is in the treatment of those words that the annotators have failed. A thousand little and mean questions arise whilst we confine our attention to the words, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." We are not in a condition to criticise that language until we complete the sentence and find at its close the all-convincing reason for giving such an exhortation.

What is Christ anxious about? What is it that he wishes to take care of? He himself gives an explicit answer to the inquiry. His one anxiety is about the condition of the HEART. "'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also;' and it is the heart that touches my supreme solicitude. If the *heart* be right, the whole outgoing of the life will be right; but if the heart be wrong, then all the actions that make up the sum total of the duties and exercises of life will also be wrong." Now I see the whole meaning, I understand what my Teacher intends me to receive as his doctrine. Provided my heart is right, he does not care if my possessions are heaven-high, if I can rise above them and stand upon them and use them with mighty strength. He is most anxious that they should not be bigger than I am, his supreme anxiety is that they should not lure my confidence and make up the sum total of my hope and expectation. So long as I can treat them as so many conveniences and use them for the good of my fellow-creatures, he cares not how many, how rich, may be my possessions. He says to me lovingly, with infinite pathos and concern, "Brother, friend, man—keep thine heart right, keep thy love in its right direction, let thy life be a continual sacrifice, burning upwards to the only throne that deserves it. Then, as for thy possessions, thou wilt be master, not slave. The more thou hast, the more the poor will have; thou wilt be treasurer and custodian, thou wilt not be oppressed

by the riches, but ennobled to dignity by them." So then there is no exhortation here against laying up property. The world must have property, and the more that property is in good hands the better; and, concerning every man who makes a good use of money, I pray the Lord to send him tenfold more. The more he has, the more the poor have; the more money the good man has, the more the whole Church has. It is better that that money should be in the hands of a good treasurer than in the hands of an untrustworthy custodian.

Look at the figures in this exhortation, showing how keen was the observation of Jesus Christ regarding everything going on around him. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt." The property of the contemporaries of Christ consisted largely of linen and embroidered goods. To have great stores of these was the Jews' great notion of wealth. Jesus Christ, looking at all the piles of linen and embroidery, said, "Take care the moth does not get into them; remember that there is a moth—do not forget the consuming insect." It was a practical and most secular exhortation.

"And rust doth corrupt." The treasures were largely hidden in the earth. Men would dig deep pits in the field and hide their most valuable possessions, and there they would rust. Jesus Christ, looking at the man filling up the earth upon his treasure, says, "Remember the rust: what you have put in the earth there is exposed to danger: you may cover it up very carefully, but the rust will get at it." There is always some danger to be provided against.

"Where thieves break through and steal." The houses were mud houses, the walls were mud walls, and the thief is at the back yonder, breaking through, boring his way through the mud defence that he may get at the treasures hidden inside. Jesus Christ says to the builder of the mud wall, "Take care, it is only mud, understand that mud is not impervious: always remember that there are weapons of iron that can break through your mud defences." Again I say unto you, there is always danger to be guarded against, and a man is no stronger than his weakest point. Beware of the moth, beware of the rust, beware of the thief. Life is based upon caution, unless it be founded in God, and then it is lifted up above all danger, or the dangers that affect it

themselves fall away before its supreme strength and immovable confidence.

So much for the exhortation, and so much for the reason. Now what is it as an *argument*? I am always struck with the common-sense of this divine Talker. Apart from his metaphysics and high imagination and noble courage and heroism, there is an element of marvellous common-sense. He grasps his subject: he lays upon it a grip that means, "You cannot take this easily from me." Let us look at it merely as an argument.

Jesus Christ says, "Riches can be *stolen*, riches can *perish*, riches can *fly away*, therefore look out for treasures that are not subject to these vexatious and harassing contingencies." Is the argument sound? Look at it again. What you have in your hands may be taken out of them, therefore have something in your *heart* that no man can get at and steal. The reasoning is sound and unanswerable. He who has nothing but what he can grasp in his hands, is no stronger in his possessions than his fingers. A man can wrench what he holds out of his possession, and they will be his no longer. Where is your Bible? If it is only in your hands as a book, though you are pressing it to your heart, it can be taken away from you, and you may be without it. But, where is your Bible? "In my head," say you, "in my heart: I know it." Then, though the book be burned with fire, the revelation is untouched.

Jesus Christ says, "Have an inward life, have an interior life, have a soul." The Teacher who teaches thus is a wise man. He warns us against the things that can be destroyed, and points us to the possessions that are indestructible. He tells you in so many words that you are no richer than your heart is; though your books be many enough to make a library of, you are only as rich as you are in your thought, feeling, aspiration, desire after God and all things godly. I feel that such teaching is true: no long and laboured argument is needed to make me feel its truthfulness. If I speak right out of my heart and let my better self be heard, I say with the Scribe, "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth."

Take it in another light, that it may be clearly seen by those who can understand better by illustration than by mere argument. You come into the house of your friend, and you are struck with

his books say upon *agriculture*. You look over the volumes and say, "Well, how very many books you have upon agriculture. I am surprised at your collection of works upon this subject." A friend belonging to the house says to you, "If you think the books upon agriculture are many, what will you say when I show you the library upon *astronomy*? If you think these books a good many upon agriculture, when I show you the astronomical works you will be utterly confounded." By the help of that illustration, go a little further and reason thus. If you think this man is rich in shares and stocks and fields and investments of one kind and another, what will you say when you see his thoughts, his feelings, his prayers, his aspirations, his plans for the amelioration of the race? Our inner nature should be so much in excess of our outer nature as to give the impression that we have no outer nature at all. We are to be so much larger in the soul than we are in the hand as to throw the hand into infinite insignificance, though in itself it have a giant's fist and can deliver a herculean blow. Let every man therefore ask himself what he has in the bank of the heart.

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil (double), thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" The heart is the eye of the life: always keep the heart pure and right, sincere and true, and you cannot stumble along. Let your motive be correct, and you will be brought along the right road, even though you may have stumbled into the wrong path for a moment. Let your heart be right, and I care not in what thicket you be tangled, you will see a clear, broad road out of it, and you shall yet rejoin the main path that lies right up towards the light and the heaven that is at the end of it.

How is it then with the heart which is the eye of the life? What is your *motive*, what is your purpose? Dare you throw back the screen and show the motive to heaven's light? If so, you cannot be weak; you cannot be the subjects of long-continued depression and fear. O youth—my child, my son—give God thine heart; and as for thy mistakes, they prove thee only to be mortal. But once let your motives become mixed, let them double themselves back into reservations and ambiguities and

uncertainties, let the inner life become a hesitation and a compromise and a trick in expediency, and you are blinded in your very centre and fount of light. And if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness ! If your supreme manhood be debased, how utter is the degradation. If you have gone down in your motive, you have gone altogether. So let a man examine himself as to his motives and purposes, and keeping these right, so as to bear the very test of fire and to stand the examination of light, he may maintain his life in the quietness of religious confidence. If you have got wrong in your motives stop. Do not be lured away by inventiveness in making excuses and palliations. To your knees, and become strong by first becoming weak. No coverings up, no clever juggleries, no assumptions of appearance, but complete, unreserved, emphatic, contrite confession, and then begin again. Remember that your eye is the centre of light, and if the eye be put out or injured, no other part of you can receive that great gift. The eye once blinded, your finger tips cannot be flamed up into illumination, your whole body is darkness. With the eye, the light is gone for ever, and wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.

How marvellous it is that a single organ should hold so much, that there should be no alternative arrangement in this matter of light, looking at which we can say, "Well, it matters little if the light goes out at one point, it can come in at another." Such is not the arrangement of divine providence : you have the one inlet of light, lose that, and your whole body, though it be great and strong and healthy, and apparently beyond the touch of death, will be full of darkness. See how much depends upon one faculty, one organ. Let the ear be deafened and all music is lost ; let the eye be blinded, and the whole firmament, with all its sun and stars, is but a covering of darkness. There is but a step between thee and death : thou hast but one right hand, take care lest it be paralyzed and fall uselessly by thy side for ever. These are the cautions of no alarmist ; they are the strong, grand, pure teachings of a Man who breathed the mountain air, and had the sea's freshness ever breathing through his magnificent heart.

"No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." We do not under-

stand this in English. Men run away with very shallow notions of what is here said; these English words do not express the Saviour's meaning, except with indefiniteness and a great distance of appreciation. No man—literally, no slave, and we do not know, thank God, what a slave is. The slave had no will of his own; every pulse of his body belonged to his master; he dare only look as the master approved; there must be no protest even in his eye, or he lost his life. He must stand, sit, come, go, at the will that was iron and that could not be broken. No man, says Christ, can sustain that relation to two masters; he cannot belong, absolutely, body, soul, spirit, will, imagination, energy, feeling, to two different masters. Masters—we do not understand this in English. We never can enter into the tragical pathos of that awful word; never to be able to call an hour my own; never to be at liberty to utter the voice of complaint; never to be permitted to look my true self, but to wear a mask to please another's eye: to be at the beck and call of a man who can take my life from me with impunity—that is to be under a master.

How many persons there are who have read this text so as to sever the spiritual and the secular. It is thus the Bible has been maltreated by some of its friends: it is thus that great excisions have been made, so that religion has been left in the Church as an all but impalpable shadow. That is the meaning of this great Teacher—we must use the spiritual and secular, for all things are sacred according to the hand that touches them. What God hath cleansed that call not thou common or unclean. You miss the grandest side of life when you separate it into spiritual and secular. There are some persons who talk about the temporalities of the Church—there are no temporalities in the Church. There are those who speak of the business side of the Church—there is no business side of the Church in any degrading sense of the term: it is all business. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" He who lights a lamp in the Church is as he who preaches a sermon; he who opens a door or keeps a gate, as he who breathes a gospel and unfolds a revelation. The difference is in the degree, not in the quality; "he who sweeps a floor for thy sake, makes that and the action fine." We must be lifted up in our whole conception of life and labour, industry and reward,

if we would enter into the spirit of Christ in his interpretation of our life and its duties.

Now comes the grand wondrous discourse concerning *secular anxiety and worldly fear*, the beautiful sermon wherein you find the reference to the lilies and the birds and the grass of the field. Let us look at that wonderful sermon a moment. We are treating this gospel by Matthew in its *wholeness* and not going into the mere detail of the occasion—as a painter paints a landscape with a church upon it. He does not take you into the church, he simply throws the church upon the landscape as part of something else, and you must catch it in its proper outline and relationship. It is so I am treating this gospel. By-and-bye we shall go to the church and spend a day there ; by-and-bye we shall come into the detail and study each particular delicate line ; meantime we have to treat the gospel in its totality, and under the direction of this feeling look at this most marvellous discourse.

“Take no thought for your life.” We do not get at the Saviour’s meaning in this English word “thought.” We do not, indeed, get into the right meaning of the word *thought* some three hundred years after the use which it first assumed. When this translation was made, the word *thought* meant something different from what it means to-day—it meant anxiety, restless, carking care ; it meant that penetration of fear which upsets the balance of life and turns the whole soul into moods of dejection and wearing anxiety. The word *thought* meant this in the time when the English Bible was translated—hence one of the historians says, “Queen Catharine died of *thought*.” Hence Cleopatra said to Enobarbus, “What shall we do, Enobarbus ?” And the answer was, “*Think*, and die.” In other words, “Fear, fret, pine away, succumb to depression, anxiety, and all the influences that can vex and tear the balance of the heart.” It is against such thought that Jesus Christ warns his disciples.

Is it possible that any man here can be encouraging himself in languor and indifference and idleness by saying that he is considering the lilies and beholding the fowls, and yielding himself to the genius of this Sermon on the Mount ? I must rudely disturb his foolish and atheistical lassitude. Let us behold the fowls of the air for a moment, and see how far their course justifies the man who is simply folding his arms and sitting still and letting

God take care of him. First, the fowls get up soon in the morning—where are you? Away goes one of your props. In the next place the fowls are most industrious: it is one of my little pleasures to watch the industry of the birds, and, indeed, they seem to have no hours. I trust nobody will ever form them into a union for the purpose of shortening the hours of labour: that would be a great mishap in the air, to cut short their song exactly as the clock struck five! O, the building that is going on now! The straw-carrying and the feather-catching and the leaf-binding—what industry! Up with the sun, working all the hours of the light, and twittering and trilling and singing all the time. There is another of your props gone, lazy man.

I find, too, that the birds are *self-supporting*: they would never take anything at your hand if they could help it. A bird is sadly driven when it comes to any man and says, "Let me peck at your hand, if you please." The birds support themselves—who supports you? You would borrow a shilling of your poor old mother if you could, and you talk about beholding the fowls of the air. You have borrowed of every friend you ever had—be just in your exegesis of the divine word, and add not the blasphemy of a fool's criticism to the behaviour of a cowardly spirit.

And the lilies—is it a happy-go-lucky life with them? Far from it. The word *lilies* here is a word that may be so interpreted as to include *all* flowers, and the flowers are found in their *proper places*, they are where they were meant to be, if they are growing properly; not only so, the flowers are working in harmony with great *laws*. Every flower draws its beauty from the sun: the flower roots itself in dark places, and prays with open face for the great light, and holds itself out with gracious willingness to catch every drop of dew that it can hold. So we must be in our proper spheres, in our right relations: we must keep the economy of life and nature as God has established it, then we shall truly, with a wide and healthy wisdom, behold the fowls and consider the lilies.

Jesus Christ gives a reason for this exhortation again. He says, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" He thus shows the *uselessness* of anxiety. Suppose now you sit up all night with your hands folded or twisted, in expression of keen unappeasable solicitude and yearning—what does it come to in the morning? Nothing. Suppose you should

belabour yourself all day long, what does it come to to-morrow? To weariness, dejection, sadness, and to all the results of misdirected energy and irreligious folly. A great teacher now living has well said that if any friend of ours had told us one hundredth part of the lies our fears have told us, we never would have allowed him to speak to us again. We would have said, "Get thee behind me, thou lying man." But our fears come every day and tell us exactly the same lies, and we give them exactly the same confidence. Is that religion? It is, but only the religion of paganism. The religion of trust, love, faith, rests in the Lord and waits patiently for him; forms a grand and loving expectation, directs it often in speechless prayer to the generous and over-arching heavens, and calmly awaits the revelation and the whole answer of God.

This is how I want to live: I want to subordinate every desire to the one aim of seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness; I want to interpret that kingdom as meaning and including all other kingdoms; and I would calmly await the leading of divine providence. Why fidget yourself, why fret and annoy yourself, why go out and throw yourself into a bed of stinging nettles merely for the sake of doing something? I would not anticipate to-morrow any more than I would anticipate death. Death is abolished; there is no dying for the man who is in Christ. Let the child close his eyelids; he will open them in heaven. Let a pagan call that death if he likes; the Christian calls it life. Nothing wrong can happen to me if I be really rooted in God, and if my eye be set towards him with the one anxiety of receiving his light.

Given that I have to take care of myself, and make all my arrangements, and go up and down life as if everything depended on me, and my life becomes a cloud, a fear, a sting, a great distress; but given that I am creature, not creator, child of the one ever-living, ever-loving Father, the very hairs of my head are all numbered, my name is written in heaven, and the whole plan of my destiny is mapped out in the skies—that I am, consciously or unconsciously, so long as my desire is as a pure flame, working out the divine intention. Let me feel that to be the case; then, come weal, come woe, high hill or cold river, or bleak wilderness or beauteous garden—come what may, God will come with it, and my life shall be a great, sweet peace.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, truly thou dost remember thy children, and with infinite mindfulness dost thou watch thine own, in all the way that they take, in all the sufferings they undergo, and in all the purposes which form the inspiration of their life. We rejoice that there is an eye evermore looking upon us which never slumbers and never sleeps ; it is our joy to believe that the arms of everlasting strength are round about us, and that the defences of omnipotence protect us from all injury. This is our confidence in God, this creates the music of our life and the hope of our gladdest expectation. We rejoice and are exceeding glad because the covenant of the Lord is written in righteousness and is signed with his own best name of love. Though the righteous stumble, he shall not utterly fall, though he be cast down, he shall not be utterly destroyed ; the Lord's hand is round about him, behold his defence is greater than fire.

We have tested thy word, all thy promises have been renewed and redeemed in our own experience, we are the living to bless thee, we are the living to magnify thy name. Truly, each of us can say, "This poor man cried unto the Lord and he heard him, and delivered him out of his distresses." Thou didst find us in the deep clay and in the horrible mire, and thou hast set our feet upon a rock and lifted up our face towards the sun ; thou hast hidden thy word in our hearts—it has been meat to us in the time of keen hunger, and water from heaven in the hour of distressing thirst. Thou hast made thine angels our ministering servants, and thy comforts have delighted and strengthened our souls. What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us ? We would give him our whole life, we would spare nothing of our energy, we do but render thee thine own, for we are bought with a price, and our body and our soul are God's. We remember the price thou dost pay for our redemption, we are not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ ; we are the purchase of his sacrifice, we are the trophies of his redeeming strength, he is our Priest, our Sacrifice, our Reconciliation, he is our all and in all we would see no man in our redemption but Jesus only, and lying low before his cross, hiding our mouth in the dust, by reason of infinite shame, we would hope to receive the offer and the gift of thy pardon because Jesus died for us.

We thank thee for this glorious gospel ; it turns our weakness into strength, it sows the very stars of light upon the field of infinite darkness, and it brings us hope when reason brings us nothing but despair. Our trust is in Christ, our daily confidence is in his blessed cross, we flee to him for succour, for pardon, for hope, we find all we need in thy Son, our Saviour—his riches are unsearchable.

We give thee praises for all thy kindness to us during the time that has elapsed

since we met together in holy fellowship at the altar. Thou hast kept our eyes from tears, our feet from falling, and our soul from death ; thou hast renewed our youth, thou hast rekindled the lamp of our hope, our table thou hast spread, our chamber thou hast watched, our house has been surrounded by thy protecting angels. We therefore take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord, and bless him with all our love, and trust him with our whole heart. Thou hast brought some of us up from long solitude, wherein we have seen the darkness of afflicting providences ; thou hast chastened us sore, thou hast reduced our strength so that it has been turned into the weakness of water, thou hast given us to feel how frail we are and how little before thee. Yet hast thou nourished us with secret comfort and enlightened us with glory from heaven, and now that we have returned to thy house, having exchanged the chamber of affliction and solitude for the open Church of enjoyment and high Christian fellowship and rapture, we thank thee for all thy mercies, we bless thee for thy gentle care. Others of us thou hast been with on land and on sea, at home and in distant places ; thou hast brought us from our wanderings to our accustomed associations. The Lord's mercy be magnified and praised in daily hymn for all this wondrous care. Thou dost number the hairs of our head, thou dost watch our steps, thou dost keep our feet from falling, thou art mindful of thine own, thy patience is long-suffering, thy love what man can measure ? We therefore praise thee, yea we bless thee, yea we magnify thee, yea with all music would we elevate thy name, and call upon our soul and all that is within us to give honour unto God, to whom we owe our life and our hope.

Let the study of thy word be useful to us to-day—may we eat of thy word as men who are an hungered eat of bread, may we drink of thy word as those who are dying of thirst long for living streams. Destroy all prejudice that would hinder a right conception of thy sacred messages, release us from the anxieties and reflections and tormenting fears of this world, and give us such sympathy with light, divinity, and all things spiritual and truly beautiful, as shall enable us to regard this service as a banquet spread by the King's own hand, and may we hear his welcome and enjoy his hospitality.

The Lord's blessing, like the light of the sun, run everywhere and carry with it morning and hope and summer, and all the joy of life. The Lord visit the sick-chamber, the prison where the penitent lies, the land where the prodigal mourns his folly and curses his sin. Be with the broken-hearted, the spirit suffering in silence that dare not utter itself in mortal speech, be with the widow and the fatherless in their affliction and dumb hopelessness ; be with the man who utters to-day his first prayer, with the pilgrim who is just going home, with the little child, opening like a bud in the summer morning—yea, be with every one of us, exclude none from thy blessing, that the appeal of thy love may be the beginning of our redemption. Amen.

Matthew vi. 24-34.

24. No man can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

25. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ?

26. Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ?

27. Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature ?

28. And why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin ;

29. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ?

31. Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? or, What shall we drink ? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed ?

32. (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) : for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34. Take therefore no thought for the morrow : for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

TWO MASTERS.

“**N**O man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” I venture to say that the true meaning of this passage has not been always represented. The common notion is that a man may *try* to serve God and mammon. Jesus Christ does not ask you for one moment to believe so flagrant an absurdity. The experiment cannot even be tried. What, then, becomes of your interpretation of your neighbour about whom you have said, many a time, “That man is trying to serve God and mammon”? The experiment does not admit of trial. You must get into the profound meaning of this word *cannot*. It indicates an impossibility even so far as the matter of trial or experiment is concerned. So the passage is a consolatory one : it is not a warning against any kind of practical hypocrisy and double-handedness—Jesus is not lifting up his voice against the ambidexters who are trying to do the same thing with both hands—he lays down, as he always does, a universal and everlasting law ; ye cannot serve God and mammon, equal to—ye cannot go east and west at the same time. Have you ever tried to do that, have you ever made such a fool of yourself as to endeavour to cross the Atlantic by staying on shore ? The meaning is, if a man’s supreme purpose in life be to

seek God and to glorify him, whatever his business upon earth may be, he elevates that business up to the level of his supreme purpose.

Where, then, is the value of your criticism upon the rich Christian man? You have said, mockingly, "That man has served God and mammon to some purpose, for he has accumulated immense wealth." Your reasoning I would call childish but for my fear of degrading the sweet name of child. Where a man's heart burns with the love of God, if he be the owner of the Bank of England, he lifts up all his property to the high level of the purpose which inspires him.

I now see a new and gracious light upon the Saviour's words. I have cudgelled myself mercilessly in many a piece of self-discipline, by imagining with the foolish that I could be serving God with one hand and serving mammon with the other. I thought the Saviour was teaching that narrow lesson. To-day he says to me, "I lay it down as a law that the supreme purpose of a man's life gives character to all he does."

Now let us look at the subject from the other end, and thus get double light upon it. Ye cannot serve mammon and God. The meaning is—If your supreme purpose in life be selfish, narrow, little, worldly—if your one object in life be to accumulate property, power, renown, anything that is sublunary, ye cannot serve God, though you may sing hymns all the day long, though you may attend church whenever the gates are open, though you may give your body to be burned and your goods to feed the poor.

All these are but so many mammon arrangements, without religious value. The supreme purpose of your life is to be satisfied with the things at hand, within the circumference of this world, and therefore ye cannot be religious, ye cannot serve God. God can only be served by the supreme purpose, the dominating and all-inspiring impulse that moves the heart and controls the behaviour.

Poor soul, you thought when you asked for an increase of income that the people would suspect you of being something of a mammon-worshipper. Never mind: they were cruel and foolish, and they did not know Christ's great gospel. You were no money-lover, no money-grubber, you only wanted to work your way honestly in the world, and to eat the bread gotten by honest labour. And you, when you told that huge lie, so black that

there is no paint in the darkness grim and gloomy enough to give it right character, when you said that if you had a thousand pounds more you would feed the poor and support the Church and did not mean a bit of it, it was a lie you told—you were serving mammon. As the poet says of you, anticipating your coming into the world, "You stole the livery of the court of heaven to serve the devil in."

The passage no longer affrights me, I understand its glorious meaning now. It is impossible to go east and west at the same time: the whole law of gravitation says "No," in an instant. It cannot be done. And so if I want to be heavenly and worldly it is impossible; if I am heavenly I sanctify the world, if I am worldly I debase the heaven. You are therefore one of two things, and there is no mixture in your character. Judge ye what I say.

Now we come again to the long and yet pithy lecture on earthliness, and its mean and fruitless anxieties. I have gone at length into that subject, yet I have something more to add. You tell me, when the Saviour warns you against thought—understanding by that word, as explained in the last lecture, cankering anxiety, killing fretfulness—that man is an anxious being; you say that no allowance is made for that great constitutional fact that man must forecast and provide and prewise and meddle with things contingent and uncertain. You say the gospel arbitrarily forbids that which is instinctive. Let me once more correct your mistake. Jesus Christ does provide for this very instinct of anxiety; in effect he says, "You say you must be anxious: very good, by all means be anxious; be true to your nature, obey the law of your constitution—only this is what I have to say to you, be sure you direct your anxiety along the right lines, do not waste your anxiety, do not make your anxiety a leak in your nature through which all that is sweetest and best may ooze." Anxious? Certainly, be anxious, but fix your anxiety upon the right object. Thus: here is a friend who is going to take a railway journey. We will, in imagination, accompany him up to the point of starting. He has gotten everything with him that he thinks he requires. He drives to the station, he hastens to the book-stall, he is most anxious to get the last and best news. He buys papers representing every section of religious and political thought, he fills up his compartment with that varied literature. He has been

most anxious about it, most fussy, almost turbulent; he has pushed other people aside in order that he might get his favourite paper and the principal antagonist to the doctrines which he believes in. And now there he is, with his compartment almost snowed up with the literature of the morning. The train will start in a minute. "Tickets, please." He has not got his ticket. Then he cannot go—too late; the law may run that if you have not got your ticket there is no time to get it, and you must wait for the next train. Has the man been anxious? Most anxious—about nothing, about the wrong thing. Of course I say to him, "Be anxious, be vigilant, be on the alert, be on the *qui vive*, do not close your eyes and fall into a slumber; be anxious, but be anxious about the right thing, sir." What avails it that he has stuffed his carriage with the literature of the morning and has forgotten the one thing without which he cannot go? How would you accost him, if he explained his case to you on the platform? You might audibly accost him in the language of sympathy—I fancy you would mentally accost him in a more appropriate tone.

That is precisely what many of us are doing, and Jesus Christ says: "Be anxious, most certainly, but do not waste your anxiety; fix it on the right objects, direct it to the proper quarter and the right end; seek, seek, seek"—and that word seek, as he spoke it, has in it agony, paroxysm, passion, importunity—"seek." O, how you did misunderstand him when you thought he forbade anxiety, and had omitted a constituent element of your nature, and had made no provision for the outgoing and expression of an almost necessary anxiety. He hits the case very graphically, with a sharpness the dullest eye must see; for he says, "Which of you by taking thought, by doing all this kind of thing, of the nature of fretfulness and peevishness, which of you by indulging in that expensive luxury, can add one cubit to his stature?" What does it all come to in practical effect? is the meaning of Christ's doctrine. Which of you by fretting about to-morrow, planning for it and scheming about it, and worrying out your very souls concerning its fortunes and destinies, can make one hair white or black? There are rocks which your anxiety cannot melt into water; there are great rolling seas which it is not in the power of your anxiety to divide. Spend your solicitude upon the right

objects ; be careful about the supreme purpose of your existence : in that direction there cannot be too much solicitude. Give your eyes no rest nor close your eyelids in slumber until you have acquainted yourselves with God and become at peace with him. And remember that anxiety, improperly used, wastes your nature, dissipates your energy, incapacitates you for the discharge of the noblest duties of life.

Let us put the thing again before us illustratively. Here is a man whose son is very delicate. He has not known what it was to enjoy a day's real health since he was born. He appears to be declining day by day in strength. The father comes to us, and we ask questions concerning the child ; and in reply to our inquiries the father says, "I am always most anxious that he should dress well, that his gloves should fit him like his skin, that his boots should be of the best possible quality, and that he should never go out without being so dressed as to attract the admiring attention of those who may pass him on the road." What would you think of a man who could talk so under such circumstances ? Do not be hard upon him, because your admission I will take and apply to you as a whip. Do you acquit him ? Remember that the judge is condemned when the guilty are acquitted.

This is the very thing we are doing, and Jesus Christ comes to us and says, "Is not the body more than raiment ?" So you have said to the man described thus imaginatively, "Sir, what about your boy's health ? Is he getting stronger ?—is he more robust ?—what can be done to establish his health ? And as for his dress and his gloves and his attire altogether—all these things may be left to settle themselves. Seek ye first the establishment of the child's health."

Well, then, this Christian doctrine is not so impracticable and other-worldly. This Christian doctrine is not a metaphysical quibble in the clouds ; there is downright common-sense—strong, robust, graphic common-sense about this Christian preaching. I should not wonder if this carpenter's Son seated upon the mountain talking to his disciples should turn out, in the long run, to be the world's greatest preacher. Let us not, however, anticipate, but attend him, and listen with the understanding to the gracious words which proceed out of his mouth.

It is not enough to speak against anxiety or to direct it into proper quarters. Jesus Christ, recognising this fact, proceeds to mitigate the anxiety which eats up the life like a canker. What do you think he does in the way of mitigation? Something most beautiful. He takes us all out for a day into the open fields. It is only recently that some doctors have learned from the great Physician to get their patients out of town as soon as they could. I speak now to many doctors: stand by that rule, get your patients away out of their old associations, out of their old chambers, where they know every pattern upon the paper, and get them away to the sea, and into the country, and up the mountains and by the river-side as soon as you possibly can, and take your own course as to whether you throw physic to the dogs. This was Jesus Christ's plan: he said, "Take a walk, change your circumstances, get rid of these narrow brick walls, get into the wide fields, read the flowers, listen to the music of the birds." Was this a novel suggestion on the part of Jesus Christ? Not at all. Did he borrow from any man? No, other men borrowed from him, only he was not always the revealed and incarnate Teacher; he was the invisible and incomprehensible Inspirer of all who went before him in the kingdom of truth and light. Where do we find this recipe before? A thousand years prior to the incarnation of the peasant Teacher, and a thousand years more than that. Once Zion was ill; she was bowed down to the dust; there was no more hope in her fainting heart, and Jacob was slain with an intolerable thirst. What was the recipe of the divine Physician? Nature. How did it run in English? Thus: "Lift up your eyes and behold who hath created all this." First he points to the stars, then to the lilies, then to the birds—to all nature! its infinite light, its minute flushes and blushings of colour, and its little trills of song from tiny and tremulous throats. Are you in great trouble and care and anxiety? Go away as soon as you can. First of all get a right theological conception of your circumstances, and understand that anxiety is wasted energy, if it be directed to such things as lie beyond your control. And then, having taken a right theological view of the case, go away, go into the fields—there is healing in nature; she is a kind and noble mother, always ready to nurse and carry us in her generous heart. The soft wind cools our fever, the infinite light charms our despair, the great space offers us new

liberties; the all-filling music, subtle as an odour wafted from distant paradises, stirs the heart to better hope. You have no money to go far away, do you say? Then go as far as you can walk. You cannot tell how healing and medicating this is. Kind Nature, Alma Mater, Loving Mother, she spreads her bounties with infinite hospitality, and by every open way to our nature she sends her healing ministries.

You now tell me that whilst you have no doubt about the doctrine, you are confronted by certain facts which astound and distress you, facts, for example, of this kind, that good men of your own acquaintance are often in great trouble, that praying men who really and truly love God and wait upon him are sometimes in great straits, and you are puzzled to harmonize the doctrine and the fact. There I think you occupy solid ground, and deserve a respectful answer. My reply is threefold. Trials are useful, trials often develop the best faculties of our nature, qualities that stir us sometimes into our healthiest energy. I would never have known how rich and good some friends were but for the afflictions that befell them. I have seen what I thought were pampered children, spoiled boys and girls; I have sometimes ventured to reason with the parents as to their method of bringing up their children; I have ventured perhaps to say, "Now, what can become of them in the event of any misfortune befalling you?" I have seen that misfortune come, and I have seen the children of such parents turned out to make their bread, and they have done it with such noble temper, such high quality of heroism, as to affect me deeply with a consciousness of my entire ignorance of what lay hidden in their character. Those children themselves have come to bless the misfortune that battered in the roof of the old house they called their home, those children have, in some cases, traced the beginning of their best and healthiest developments to afflictions which, for the time being, distressed them with intolerable agony. I call you to witness whether you would have been the man you are to-day in wisdom, in range of experience, in mellowness, if your one ewe lamb had not been taken from you, if your fig-tree had not been barked, if your little heritage had not been shaken by the rude winds. You are the sweeter for every loss you have sustained. You are the kinder and nobler for every affliction you have rightly received, your weakness has become your strength.

Then I would remember in the second place that prosperity has its pains and trials. Do not imagine that prosperity of a worldly kind is another word for heaven. You think what you would have done if your circumstances of an outward kind had been very different. You are mistaken. Let us go into this rich man's fine house and sit in the sumptuously garnished room until he comes in. What a room it is ; I see the artist's hand everywhere. What a beautiful outlook, what noble grounds, what ancient trees, what singing birds ! The man who lives here cannot be unhappy ; surely this is the very vicinage of some better land. So you soliloquize, and when you get into confidential conversation with the occupant of that noble mansion you may find that there is a thorn under every rose, a worm at every root, bitterness in every cup, and that the house is but a garnished sepulchre. It may be so, it may not be so—still the solemn fact remains that prosperity itself is a continual temptation, a subtle and persistent trial of every virtue of the heart.

To this double reply I add another answer, namely, that God knows exactly with how much we can be trusted. If he knows what temptations we can bear, understanding that word in its narrow sense as including only diabolic assaults on the heart, he knows also what prosperity we can bear. He gives me just what I can do with ; he that gathers much has nothing over, he that gathers little has no want. A contented spirit is a continual feast ; when the heart has rest in God there is always bread enough on the table. We think we can do with more, but God knows what we can do with, and he will see that we shall have it. Your Heavenly Father knows what ye have need of, and his knowledge is the measure of his service. I rest in that doctrine, and no fool can throw a troubling stone into the peaceful lake of my profoundest confidence.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we know that thy word is truth, and that the entrance in of thy word doth give light to every heart. There is no light without thy word, nor is there any truth. We humbly pray thee to send upon us the glory of thy revelation, that seeing the light from heaven we may not mistake the things that are upon the earth. We humbly pray thee to give us a right sense of all the things that are round about us ; we mistake the small for the great and the near for the precious, and we know not where we are nor what we look at but as thy spirit dwelleth in us, giving us the right vision and the right sense of all things. Show us the glory of the Lord, so far as our eyes may be able to bear the great light ; wherein our vision fails to look upon the glory, show unto our eyes all the goodness of God. Make thy goodness pass before us, thy gentle acts, long-suffering patience, thine all-hopeful love concerning men who have smitten thee in the face, and wounded sorely thy very heart. Thus beholding thy goodness, may we be prepared for the revelation of thy glory, when thou dost call us into the other and higher state.

Thy care of us has been very tender ; thou hast dried our tears with a soft hand, thou hast spoken to our hearts in a voice that did not smite them as with thunder, but that fell with the graciousness of the early and the latter rain. Thou hast been mindful of our weakness ; wherein thou hast brought thine omnipotence to bear upon our feebleness, thou hast repeated the greatest of thy miracles. Thou hast spread our table in the wilderness, and found water for us in sandy and barren places ; thou hast put laughter into our mouth suddenly, when our life was woe-begone and the grave was yawning at our feet. Mighty have been our deliverances—thou hast taken the prey from strong hands and thou hast broken down men of great power. Thou hast delivered us and redeemed us and magnified thy name and thy grace in our life, therefore are we here to-day, this Easter morn, with a new hymn and a glowing psalm, yea, with a loud sweet anthem to bless the great and mighty hand of God and the infinite heart of his immeasurable love.

Hear thou the prayer thy servants pray ; listen to the sighing of the sad, the wounded spirit ; give peace where there has long been unrest or fierce tumult or great dejection ; grant a divine deliverance to those who have been long bound in darkness they could not penetrate ; and upon us all send some Easter blessing, some resurrectional glance of infinite glory that shall awaken our best hopes and revive our forgotten recollections, and rekindle the enthusiasm of our early love. Thou didst call us out of darkness into thy marvellous light, thou didst give unto our hearts resurrection through the cross and sacrifice of our dearly-beloved and only Saviour. Wherein we have forgotten these marvels of thy grace, do thou now revive their tenderest recollection, so that every heart

may bless thee with a new delight, with a high satisfaction, and with an ennobled infinite hope.

We put our lives into thine hands, we would not take care of ourselves, or surely our protection would be vanity. We therefore ask thee to take us, body, soul, and spirit, into thine own keeping: watch the door of our heart, keep the source of our thoughts, and sanctify the very spring of our will and all the actions in which it expresses itself, and may we be found at last, through the blood of the Lamb, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, worthy of his own beauty, worthy of his own comeliness.

The Lord send a light upon his word whensoever we read it, that we may behold its true meaning, and may not fall into the dejection of those who understand nothing but the letter. Show us that the letter is the goblet which holds the wine, and may we drink of the wine of thy wisdom and thy love, and be refreshed and inspired by it every day.

The Lord look upon us at this time of the year, with all the hopefulness of spring breathing around us, with many a sign of returning life. Thou art re-writing thy promises in every opening flower and every promising bud: behold in this revolution of the year do we see the re-writing of some of thy tenderest words. May there be spring in our heart, a vernal breeze in the soul, a gracious and helpful light shining upon the whole breadth of our life, and in due time may we bring forth fruit unto God which shall please the Most High and gladden him who planted the vine.

We beseech thee to direct us in all the way that we should take, in view of our great responsibilities and opportunities. Enable us to see the measure of our life, and to understand the brevity of our day, and, with all wakefulness of heart, and industry of hand, and vigilance of mind, may we be about our Father's business, and be found at last as they that wait for their Lord. Regard the family, spare the father, the mother, and all the children, kindle the fire on the cold day, spread the table to meet returning hunger, and make the bed of the afflicted, and bless its pillow with the touch of thine own hand. Regard those who are engaged in business, and help them to do their work every day with an honourable spirit and a religious purpose, and may their bread be sweet and satisfying because of the honesty through which it is procured. Bless thy servants in basket and in store, and may there be no reason for bitter anxiety because of the bread that perisheth.

Direct the nation in all the crises of its history, inspire the minds of men by thy Holy Spirit—do thou rule the raging of the seas and make the waters calm; walk thou upon every sea that has been disturbed, and breathe thy blessing upon all thy people. God save the Queen, add many unto the days of her life, establish her throne in righteousness, and clothe her reign with prosperity.

And now let us seek for a blessing coming to every heart, a consciousness of sin forgiven through the blood of the Lamb, and a happy delight in the possession of the Holy Spirit, whose it is to sanctify and to make pure with the holiness of God. Amen.

Matthew vii. 1-6.

1. Judge not, that ye be not judged.
2. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

3. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

4. Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

5. Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

6. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

MUTUAL CRITICISMS.

“JUDGE not, that ye be not judged.” Do not criticise with a censorious and unkindly spirit, do not be bitter, do not be moved by the spirit of animosity and illiberality and uncharitableness. We must judge, in the sense of forming opinions and estimates of one another—that is not the kind of judgment which is forbidden in this exhortation by Jesus Christ. We may get the true meaning of the word by another use which is made of it elsewhere in the Scriptures. Thus, in John, third chapter and seventeenth verse we read: “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world;” the same word is translated *judged* in our text that is translated *condemn* in this verse. And in the twelfth chapter of John: “I came not to *judge* the world,” to take a bitter and unkind and hostile view of it. And again we read: “Of the hope of the resurrection of the dead am I”—the same word—“*called in question*.” And once more we read: “One man *esteemeth*”—the same word—“one day above another: another man *esteemeth*”—the same word—“every day alike.” When therefore we are called upon to judge, we are warned against that self-righteousness which condemns everybody who does not do exactly as we think they ought to do. The spirit that is condemned here is one of infallibility. Find a man who makes himself the standard of everybody's conduct, who judges everybody by himself, by what he would have done under such and such circumstances, and who gives large licence to his tongue in forming and giving opinions upon such persons, and you find the very man referred to in this exhortation. In so far as you are self-contented, self-pleased, self-righteous, in so far as you think it to be your duty to sit down upon the throne of judgment and to judge all your neighbours and the whole human race, in so far are

you guilty of the spirit of judgment which Jesus Christ condemns in this text.

Jesus Christ tells you that such judgment does not fall to the ground : you are doing more than merely uttering words when you pass such judgment upon your fellow-creatures. You are not whiling away an hour, you are sowing seed which you will one day have to reap in the form of fruit, for, "with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged : and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Do not suppose that you are merely passing an opinion upon your fellow-men, do not fall back upon your supposed innocence, and say that you merely observed or remarked so and so. You shall give an account for every idle word ; you shall be made to feel the bitterness of your own speech, the cruelty of your own judgment shall come back upon you like a devouring flame. Jesus Christ undertakes to warn men as to the consequence and issue of certain conditions of spirit, so that no man goes forward in these matters in ignorance of what the result will be.

Let us understand what he meant by this. Did he mean, literally, "with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged"?—that is to say, that some other man would pass exactly the same opinion upon us that we passed upon others? Not at all in that little narrow sense of the word. That was not the *lex talionis* which he laid down : therein he would have but repeated the old law of a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye, whereas he came to lay down a broader judgment. What, then, did the words mean? Not that we should have snarl for snarl, hostile criticism for hostile criticism, one for one and two for two, according to the number and measure thereof. He meant that somehow or other all society, the aggregated man, the all but God, would encounter us in our own spirit ; people who never heard of us would somehow rise up to condemn us and reward us according to our own spirit. By some mysterious action of divine providence, society would condemn us with the condemnation we had accorded to others.

You have often been puzzled to know how it was that such and such consequences arose from such and such acts. You have wondered at the unkindness of men, at the bitterness of their judgment. Has it ever occurred to you that the reason may,

possibly, have been in yourself—a reason that has been sleeping full twenty years, and is now only bearing fruit? You remember your unkindness to your father and your mother; how you sat on the throne of criticism at the fireside and condemned the whole household in a spirit of self-righteous pride? You remember what an intolerable nuisance you were in the Church twenty years ago, snarling at everyone, snubbing everybody, setting up your great righteousness as a rebuke of their feeble morality—how the unkind word was always upon your tongue, and how men might feel perfectly sure that you would go along any censorious line along which they might lead. All that is now coming back to you. You have been smitten first on the one cheek, then on the other. You have been smitten on the head; society scorns you, repudiates you, views you with suspicion and unkindness and distrust. You sowed the wind, you are reaping the whirlwind; you have eaten forbidden fruit, and you are now undergoing its most painful consequences.

Find a kind man, one of noble and liberal spirit, whose thought is always of the charitable type, who cannot be gotten to say a harsh or unfeeling word about anybody—the time will come when society will throw its arms around him and take care of him and nourish and defend him. He shall reap the bountiful harvest of his own beneficence. Such a man will not be allowed to be friendless in the time of his old age: he took no pains to defend or befriend himself, he had a kind word for everybody, he had a crust of bread for the poor and a cup of water for the thirsty—he could always be looked to for the glowing and kind word, nothing mean, bitter, selfish, hostile, unamiable, ever fell from his ruddy lips—and now in the time of his old age and decrepitude, or when any evil report maliciously arises against him, society will close around him and protect the grand old tree from the knife and the axe and the sword of those who would cleave it down.

And what is true of the kind man is true also of the bitter man. There are some persons who cannot speak sweetly. I do not altogether blame them, for their life seems to be one of the mysteries of Providence, inscrutable, wholly beyond our explanation, here and now: we can only say it were better for such that they had not been born—but they cannot speak the noble word, they cannot give you a grand beneficent judgment of any human crea-

ture or any human deed, their criticism is bitter, highly acidulated—something even worse, highly vitriolized, most pungent, and every word has in it an intent of cruel death. What will be the judgment society will pass upon such persons by-and-bye? They will get what they have given, they will reap as they have sown—let that word never be forgotten. God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Not in some little literal way of a man dealing with him as he dealt with others, but with that marvellous social influence which gets around a man to help him up or to smite and blast him. Thank God for these great promises and laws that make society secure! They give solidity to the whole constitution of humanity. We cannot play at criticism and be harmless, we cannot be censorious and then retire upon our respectability. Every bitter word you have spoken about man, woman, or child has gone out to come back again, and will smite you some day. With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. This is a great law, and all human history is its exposition and justification.

Jesus Christ now proceeds to give a vivid application of these words, and to accent them as with the point of a sword. "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" Are we sure that we have laid hold of the right exposition of these words in our other lessons received upon them from divers teachers? What is the beam in the eye of the judge? Does it mean that though I condemn some little fault in you I have a greater fault of my own which has not yet been discovered? I do not understand it in that light. Here is a man about whom no fault can ever be found of the usual kind, and yet he is continually judging other men, sentencing some to darkness and others to oblivion, and passing various sentences upon those who are round about him, and yet he is sober, chaste, good in all we can say about him, punctual in his church attendances, exact in his payments, of good standing in the market-place—what beam is there in the eye of such a man? Now we come to the right meaning. He is censorious: that is the beam referred to by the great Teacher. The very fact that he judges another man in an uncharitable spirit is the beam, compared with which any other fault is a mere mote or

speck, a mere splinter of wood compared to a great beam of timber.

That is how Jesus Christ estimates the censorious spirit. He says it is to other faults as a beam is to a little splinter. The man is a model man in everything else so far as society knows him, exact, punctual, critical in all his relations, a more honourable man is not to be found in the market-place, all his payments are promptly and completely made, and there is nothing at all about him except this miserable spirit of criticism upon other people, always finding fault with somebody else. Now Jesus Christ says that although he be faultless in all the ordinary senses of that term, the very spirit of censoriousness that is in him is a great beam across his eyes. Let us, then, take great care lest the very thing that we had imagined to be no fault at all is the supreme fault.

Let us illustrate this : here is a man who will slander his neighbour by the hour, and calls himself a Christian, never doubts his own Christianity ; he sends heterodox thinkers to hell by the thousand, he whips the Unitarians into the very hottest perdition—all that he himself does is to slander his neighbour, and then engage in prayer. It never occurs to him that slander is a deadlier sin than mere intellectual error. Jesus calls the slanderous spirit a beam compared with which any other mistake is a little thin splinter. Here is a man who condemns every poor creature that is overtaken in a fault. He has no sympathy with such. The man took a glass of drink too much, lost his equilibrium, was seen in a reeling state—that circumstance is reported to the man who only indulges in slanderous criticism, and the man instantly calls for the excommunication of the erring brother from the Church, not knowing that he himself is drunk, but not with wine, drunk with a hostile spirit, drunk with uncharitableness, drunk with the feeling that rejoices in the slips and falls of others. O thou hypocrite, actor, masked and visored man ! Pluck the beam from thine own eye—then shalt thou see more clearly the mote, the splinter, that is in thy brother's eye.

I would preach to myself as loudly and keenly as to any other man, herein, if so be I have been guilty of this ineffable meanness, and this most detestable of all tricks of the devil, to speak an unkind word about any human creature, or suspect the honesty of

any man. If ever I have said about a brother minister, "He is a fine man in many respects, a noble creature, grand, chivalrous kind of soul—but—" if ever I have said that *but*, God will punish me for it. I shall suffer loss therein. If my brother has fallen, and I have said, so low down in my consciousness that I could hardly hear it myself, "I am rather glad of it," God will give me a hell for that. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Have I ever said one unkind or thoughtless word about any human creature? It has been as a beam in my eye, while your faults, even if you have been intemperate, are virtues, compared with my huge overshadowing sin.

We do not lay hold of this great truth sufficiently. We think that a little slander is of no consequence. To be called up before the church and condemned for slander! Condemn the drunkard, turn out the man who by infinite pressure has committed some sin—turn *him* out—certainly, and never go after him and never care what becomes of him, let a wolf gnaw him at the core—only get rid of him:—if we go home and speak unkindly of man, woman, or child, who is the great sinner, the drunkard we have just expelled, or the closely-shaven, highly-polished Christian who does nothing but filch his neighbour's good name? It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. You do not know the meaning of Christ's gospel, you are not in the kingdom at all; you have learned a few words which you chatter with parrot-like accuracy, but the gospel, the all-redeeming, all-hoping, all-saving gospel, you know nothing about.

So then do not imagine that this is the case of a great drunkard speaking against some person with a much smaller fault. It is the case of censoriousness against any other fault, the slander-spirit against the whole catalogue of devilisms. Wherein then shall we wash our hearts and cleanse our souls? Perhaps I may have spoken against some men—if I have, I shall yet feel the rod of the divine vengeance upon my life. Thou art inexcusable, O man! whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest doest the same things. That is the meaning of the Saviour's teaching. Wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself. To judge is to condemn. Cleanse the Church of this spirit of bitterness and its

orthodoxy will take care of itself. O I cry before Christ some times, when I see him very clearly—I just fall right down at his feet and cry, and tell him that the people are most anxious about their intellectual views, and would curse any number of people who did not subscribe their catechism, and take a keen delight in damning and ramming them down in the deepest and hottest hell—but, O Thou wounded One ! when they get together they have not a kind, noble, hopeful word to speak of any creature that differs from them. “Then,” saith he, “they have a beam in their eye, compared with which, the faults of others may be but splinters.” Why dost thou judge thy brother, why dost thou set at naught thy brother, for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ ?

Let us come to verse 6. “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.” Here is the spirit of judgment : how am I to know which is the dog, how am I to know how to classify those who are no better than swine—is not this the very spirit that has been condemned ? No, we are not now talking about men who belong to the same universe. We have been speaking, or hearing Christ speak, rather, about brother’s treatment of brother ; we are now hearing him speak about the treatment of those who neither understand nor appreciate our heart’s best life. The word *brother* now drops out of the criticism and other words are imported into the consideration of the case. Jesus Christ when he went before Herod would not give that which was holy unto the dogs, neither would he cast his pearls before swine. You must speak your deepest thinkings to the ear of sympathy, you must find out who has the spirit of communion with your spirit, when you come to utter the profoundest feelings and highest aspirations of your heart. Speak not in the ears of a fool ; for he will despise the wisdom of thy words. Reprove not a scorner lest he hate thee, rebuke a wise man and he will love thee.

You know what it is to be in want of sympathy. You have a great grief, and you say, “To whom can I tell this ?” If I tell it to one, I get it all back again, as if I had spoken to a rock ; if I tell it to another kind of heart, why the very telling of it seems to be a kind of evaporation by which my oppressed spirit is relieved. Do not speak the deepest secrets of your soul to

those who have never been in the same mental or spiritual condition : they will think you erratic, romantic, eccentric—they will pity you : when they go away from hearing your tale they will intimate that your mind is a little unsettled, and that they have their fears about you. They do not understand the graphic language of your tragic experience, they have never been in the same darkness, never fought the same battle, never drunk of the same bitter cup ; therefore, when you come near them, speak not : silence is better than speech in such society—give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you, and you hear that your most sacred feelings have been travestied and your most solemn words have been mocked.

We have all had experience of this kind, it may be, in some degree : we have told what we thought was a friendly heart some bitter thing that was troubling us very much, and it has actually come back to us in the form of a falsehood, that has turned again and rent us. Hast thou a friend ? Treat him as such, bind him to thine heart with hooks of steel, tell him everything : he will divide thy burdens, he will double thy joys. Beware of the unsympathetic ear, beware of the unsympathetic heart : thou wilt get nothing from those but trampling and rending.

Now some may say, having heard this preaching of Jesus Christ, "Where is the gospel ? There is not a word of gospel in all the sermon which Jesus Christ has preached to us this morning. There is nothing evangelic, there is nothing doctrinally savoury, there is no old wine of blood. Seneca might have said this, it might have been written in old Latin." You think so ? You try to carry out the injunction of the text, and ere you have gone two steps in the direction of its accomplishment you will want Christ and the cross, and the blood and the Holy Ghost, for this is the last and chiefest of the divine directions.

This teaching, some may say, is purely negative ; it is telling us what not to do. You try to realize the doctrine and you will see how far it is merely negative. If you sit within the narrowness of the letter you may call it a negative kind of teaching, but if you try to carry it out in your life, if you never more have to slander a man, think or speak unkindly about any human creature,

you will soon know whether the doctrine is negative or positive. It is courageous, for the Scribes and the Pharisees were the princes of slander, and of malicious hostile criticism ; it is spiritual, for it searches the heart, and lays down a principle which cannot be carried out by mere mechanism. This is not a trick in handicraft, this is an outgoing and blossom of the renewed heart ; it is practical, there is nothing sentimental in this, this is the eloquence of action.

If you, from this time forth, could show the spirit of charity you would strike the mocker dumb. He has his best hold upon us when he hears us criticising one another. He says, "See how these Christians love one another." When he hears ministers undervaluing one another, running down each other's preaching and methods of work, he says, "See how these Christians love one another." When he hears various communions of Christians traducing one another, proving one another wrong, and excommunicating one another, he says, "See how these Christians love one another." When he comes to the cemetery and sees a chapel on one side on consecrated ground and a chapel on the other on unconsecrated ground, he laughs a laugh, he has a right to laugh, and says, "See how these Christians love one another."

My friends, it has too long been the case of orthodoxy *versus* heterodoxy, Trinitarian *versus* Unitarian, citadel against tower, and A against B. "Thou hypocrite," says the great Teacher, "thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam of hostile judgment and uncharitable criticism out of thine own eye ; then shalt thou see more clearly to cast out the little splinter that is in thy brother's eye."

PRAVER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, do thou send a plentiful rain upon thine inheritance, and make this people rejoice with great joy. Do thou nourish us and comfort us with the bread of heaven, and with all the tender solaces of thine heart. Our life is in thine hand and not in our own, our days thou dost number, and our appointments thou dost make, yea, the day of our birth and the day of our death are both set down in the book which is open before thee. Thou hast assured us of thy presence, if we cry for it mightily through Jesus Christ our Priest and Saviour, for thy presence we do now cry, yea, our whole heart gathers itself up into one vehement desire that we might know where to find thee, that we might come into thy presence, that thou mightest dwell with us, and abide with us, and bear dominion over our whole life. This is our prayer, and to it thou hast but one answer : thy reply is an answer of love, thou wilt not deny the request of the heart that begs thy presence, through all the wondrous ministry of the Cross.

Thou hast kept us and not we ourselves ; thou hast lighted our lamp, and the strong wind has not blown it out ; thou hast established us in sureness, and behold the storm has vanished and we are still alive. It is because the good hand of the Lord our God is upon us that we are continued unto this day with root unshaken and branch unbroken, and with all the spring light pouring its tender blessing upon us, every beam a prophecy and every ray a blessing. We are in thine house now to eat and to drink according to the abundance of thine own welcome ; we bring our hunger and our thirst where they can alone be satisfied. In our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare, and as for the river of God it is full of water, and if a man drink thereof he shall thirst no more. Whilst we are in thine house may the light fill our life, may the love of the cross burn in our hearts, may the infinite work of thy Son our Saviour disclose unto us all the beauteousness and all the sufficiency which he intended it to disclose. May our hearts glow with a new ardour, may our spirits rise with still higher and purer aspiration, may our heart go out after the Living One in cries of distress and yet of hope, until thou dost come to every heart amongst us, and make it thy chosen dwelling-place.

Few and evil have been the days of thy servants upon the earth, yea, though they be counted as many among men, yet has their number been few in thy sight and evil in our own. Behold we are of yesterday and know nothing, we are afraid of the dust, we tremble before the shadow, we turn away from the stroke of thy rod, and our hearts are melted with fear like water. Do thou therefore visit us in our weakness and come as the physician comes to men that die, and breathe upon us with all gentleness, subduing the wind of thine infinity,

breathing upon us thy tender blessing. We are bruised reeds, unfit for music ; do thou bind up our wounds and heal us and then breathe into us, and may our answer be one of gentle music. We are as smoking flax, we flicker before thee like a flame and die. O, that thou wouldst breathe upon it, and strengthen the fire by thy breathing, until our whole nature is aflame and aglow with thy presence ; then would our life be always in the Sabbath, and our whole hope would be set upon things invisible.

Pity us in our sorrows and distresses, do not mock us in our miscalculations and follies, do not discourage us with bitter taunting from heaven when our own souls misgive us and we are afraid to try the good again ; but with all gentleness and comfortableness do thou encourage us once more to do that which is right and to attempt that which is holy, and with every attempt do thou give increase of strength.

The Lord visit us according to the breadth and depth of our painful necessity. What every heart needs thou knowest : the prayer we dare not speak thou hearest ; the gentlest knocking at thy door is heard as thunder in thine house. When we seek may we find. Thou knowest what we would be, what we would have, and what we would do, and we lay this before thee in uttered words or in silent desire, and we would desire to say at last, having completed the tale of our want and the prayer of our ignorance, " Nevertheless, not our will but thine be done." Amen.

Matthew vii. 7-12.

7. Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you :

8. For every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

9. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone ?

10. Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent ?

11. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him ?

12. Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them : for this is the law and the prophets.

CHRISTIAN CRITICISM.

SO, then, the commerce between earth and heaven is perfectly honest and straightforward. There is nothing of moral jugglery about it. The wayfaring man, though a fool, may read these plain words and understand them. Do not attempt to steal anything from heaven ; ask for it. Do not try any illegitimate methods of getting, finding, or anything else. The plan is simple, honest, perfectly intelligible and available to every sincere and simple-minded heart. Did you suppose that

any man got aught from heaven by a species of legerdemain? Has it ever entered into your heart that some man was richer in spiritual graces than you are because he deluded God? Such is an infinite mistake on your part: the human side of this transaction is beautiful in its simplicity—ask, seek, knock. You thought religion was an affair of mystery,—deep and dark clouding, and impenetrable haze. It is the commerce between a child and his father. There is no mystery whatever about it, it is honest commerce. The bread we get from heaven we get honestly: you are not ill-used if you have not got that bread: ye have not, because ye ask not, or because ye ask amiss.

It is something to know that the human side of this transaction is perfectly intelligible and simple, and it is something to know that the human side of this transaction is that which applies to all our progress in life, whatsoever it be, in so far as it is honest, substantial, and really good and durable. There is no particular masonic word to get hold of, nor is there any Eleusinian grip of the hand to learn. This is not a trick in the black art; it is asking, receiving,—seeking, finding,—knocking and having the door opened in reply to the appeal. All religion will be found at last, in so far as it is true, to be equally simple, equally to illustrate the law of cause and effect. The mystery that we find in the Christian religion we too often bring to it: it is but a gilding of the cloud of our own ignorance. The way of the Lord is equal, and his path among men is often such as can be apprehended by sanctified intelligence.

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” If you want your income increased, ask for it; if you want your health re-established, seek the Physician—God, the one Healer, in whose heart grow all plants with healing juice flowing in their salubrious veins. If you want to advance in life knock at the door, and while you are knocking it shall be thrown open to you. There is no condition specified, there is no particular class of persons identified as the favoured sect or denomination—for every one that asketh receiveth. There is no condition of title, character, claim: words cannot be more simple and more inclusive. If you want increase,

health, joy, satisfaction, advancement, riches, honour—ask, and ye shall receive, for every one that asketh receiveth. Why sit we here, therefore, poor dwarfs, empty of pocket, feeble of hand, blind of intellect, failing in health, crushed before the moth and the worm, and courting with cowardly spirit our own grave, that we may be hidden from the light of the day? Nothing lies between me and what I want but honest supplication. Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication make known your requests unto God. Never mind how bad you are—you have simply to ask what you like and you shall have it.

There is not one word of truth in that statement, and yet who would wonder if some persons who read the Bible in fragments and morsels should openly and emphatically declare that to be the divine revelation? Learn to trust not only in the text but in the context. What I have now laid down to you would seem to be the very first meaning of the words I have read. That meaning seems to be written upon the very face of the text, and yet every sentence I have uttered in the latter part of the exposition is utterly false. How can that be proved to be so? By Christ's own words. But is there any condition signified in the text? Most undoubtedly there is a vital condition, not only signified but explicitly laid down in so many words. You must not break in on the Saviour whilst he is preaching and teaching: you must hear his whole statement and compare part with part, and by comparing one part with another you must establish the truth which he came to reveal and enforce. Let us, therefore, look at the illustration which he himself gives of the doctrine which he has laid down.

“Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread will he give him a stone, or if he ask a fish will he give him a serpent?” Then there is a certain class specified in the text? Undoubtedly. What is that class? “What man is there of you whom if *his son* ask bread.” It is a filial relation, it is a child praying to his father. It is not an alien, a stranger, a rebel, it is a child's heart praying a child's prayer. What further condition is there specified in the text? The next condition laid down in the text is that what we ask for is good. Read again. “What man is there of you whom if his son ask *bread*, or *fish*, or *egg*.” Why, these are necessary to life. You talked just now about asking for a double

income, and a larger house, and fifty more fields added to your small estate. No, no—the doctrine relates to bread, fish, egg—food—necessaries of life, and it is the son that prays. So, then, the foolish man who first ran away with the idea that we only had to go and ask and have, is altogether disqualified for the exposition of this portion of Scripture. He talks a foreign tongue, he utters the fool's swift language that hath no faith or sense in it. The strong limitation, the definition of boundary that is not to be trespassed is—Son, as the suppliant; Bread, Fish, Egg as the subjects of petition. Bodily nutriment, intellectual nutriment, spiritual nutriment, the bread, the fish, the egg applied to all the necessities of our multifold hunger and thirst that evermore besiege and urge and distress our nature. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs. Dog, you cannot pray! This is a portion of meat for the king's children; it is a special household that sits down at this table, and eats and drinks abundantly of this divine hospitality.

“What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread will he give him a stone, or if he ask a fish will he give him a serpent?” and elsewhere, “if he ask an egg will he give him a scorpion?” What is the great deduction of the divine Teacher? “If ye then, being evil, short-sighted, mean-hearted, children of miscalculation, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” This is the true method of teaching, climbing up step by step from the human to the divine. Said I not unto you ye are gods? Learn from the little divinity that is in yourself, the infinite divinity that is in God. When you are at your very best, in love, pity, sacrifice, care for others, multiply that condition of heart by infinity, and the result will be your Father which is in heaven. Let common-sense assist you in all these expositions, and you will have no difficulty in getting down to the root.

Look at the case of your own family to-day, and your child shall come and say to you, “Give me your most precious possession.” What would be your reply to the little child? Would it be an instant imparting of the gift? Nothing of the kind. Your child shall come to you and say, “Let me go out all to-day and all to-morrow, and never you ask where I am or what I am doing.

Now I have asked you, you give." What would you say to your seven-year-old little boy who came with that prayer? If ye then, being evil, children of the night, and of the bewildering shadows, unable to see straight and clear, know how to say "No" under the inspiration of love, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven say "No" to your poor prayers, your mean and ignorant supplications, your asking for scorpions under the supposition that they are eggs? For the naturalist tells us that the scorpion coils itself up so as to look very like an egg; hard-hearted would be our Father in heaven, having heard our prayer when we have mistaken a coiled scorpion for an egg, if his answer would be the reply of death.

How do I stand then towards this Giver? Just as a child stands towards a wise father. Sometimes a father says to a child, when the child asks for more bread, "You have had enough, child." The father does not begrudge the bread, he delights in the child's appetite for food, but having some regard to the child capacity and health, he may, even in that direction, interpose the suggestion that the boundary has been reached. Is he therefore cruel? Is he therefore unkind? He may simply be wise and thoughtful, a prudent father whose love asserts itself even in the form of prohibition. Is he a wise father who lets his child do exactly what the child wants to do, who gives a hearty "Yes" to every appeal of the child, who has no will of his own, no love, no firmness? What can become of a child brought up under such loose government, if the word government in that connection be not wholly a misapplication of the word? The child will come to ruin. It is not love that suspends discipline, it is love that adjusts it, measures it, lifts it into a sacrament, making it holy, often straining the sensibilities of him who enforces or inflicts it, but under the sweet and bright hope that its infliction will terminate in health and blessing. We have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much more be subject unto the Father of spirits and live?

So we find the element of character and discipline and prohibitive wisdom even in this domain of supplication and desire. Be sure you ask for good things and your answer shall be plentiful, and thank God that he says "No" to some prayers. I have gone, as no doubt you have, with prayers to God to be sent, or to

be spared, or to be directed thus and so, and if the answer had been "Yes" we should not have been living men to-day. Let us, therefore, learn to put our prayers into the court of heaven, and having delivered them word by word, it may be sometimes with strong crying and tears, as if our life depended upon an instant reply, let us learn to say, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done."

Read again. "Ask, seek, knock." That might be the development of one action; these may not be three distinct services on our part, but this line may mark the growing intensity of our religious application. Ask—the easiest and simplest of exercises: seek—implying more industry and anxiety: knock—suggestive of vehement desire and perhaps impatience of spirit and eagerness of will and resoluteness. Our prayer has passed through all these transitions. Hear the good man's wise, rich prayer, how he asks in quiet, deep, fluent speech, how he passes on into seeking, stooping, lighting a candle and sweeping the house diligently, as if in search of that which is more precious than gold. See how he betakes himself to one supreme effort, laying down torch and broom, and going with both hands to the door of heaven, and knocking as if God had hardly time to open the door, because the wolf was so near. It is one grand prayer, beginning with the ease of a child's communion, ending with the resoluteness and the violence of a man who feels that time is dying and opportunity closing swiftly.

Do you know all the manners of prayer? Is your prayer quite an easy exercise, or does it strain the soul and awaken the highest efforts? Look how much we have that we do not ask for, and that does not come as the result of our seeking, knocking, or any variety of our supplication and appeal to heaven. And yet they must have come in answer to some word that is equivalent to prayer. For example—all the light of day: the sun does not come out of his eastern chamber because some suppliant begged that he might return. And all the beauty of the spring, the luxuriance of the summer, the infinite largess of the autumn—these are not God's "Amens" to our small petitions, they are divine anticipations of human necessity, they are answers before the prayer is spoken—he *prevents* us with his goodness, and his goodness should lead us to repentance. And we learn from the

infinitude of his gifts, laid upon our life without our asking, how to utter big prayers, vast petitions, petitions worthy of himself.

Have we not measured our prayers by ourselves, and only stretched our supplications over the mean breadth of our own conception of life? When shall we learn to fill our mouth with great words and to utter prayers meant for heaven? "Ye have not, because ye ask not." God says, "Bring your vessels, and the oil shall flow." More vessels, more oil; more still, and still more oil. Who gives up? Man. He says, "I have no more vessels"—and God causes the oil to cease its flow. Never did God say, "There is no more *oil*," it is always man that says, "There is no more *room*."

I have spoken of the gift of the light of the day, and of the beauty and richness of the succeeding seasons, but these are mean gifts. He who gave them gave us without our asking—CHRIST. And he that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Christ did not come in answer to prayer, the cross was not set up because some ardent heart desired its elevation; Jesus Christ is the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, God's answer to God's own prayer. So also is the gift of our life and all its responsibilities; we did not ask to live, we did not ask for one talent, or two, or five: I did not ask to be preacher or teacher, you did not ask to be merchantman or writer or thinker, or leader of human opinion—we are what we are in all these matters of capacity and appointment by the grace or wisdom of God.

So then there is a region in which prayer seems to be uncalled for, or to be utterly without opportunity and avail. The gifts of God in nature, in redemption, in life, in responsibility, these are determined by his own will and not by our prayer. Yet there are, in relation to our life, many interstices which are to be filled by our own supplications and prayers. A man comes to feel somewhat of the range of his own capacity, then he besieges the throne of grace for direction, sanctification, and for the upholding and comforting of holy grace that he may not waste his life pouring it out like a plentiful rain upon the unanswering sand. The man comes to find that he was born into the world with feeble constitution, with an irritable temperament, with physical

defects or excesses that require the continual vigilance of his heart and the continual sanctification of God. Then he begins to pray, God having in all things left an opening for prayer. There be those who pray for fine days : I do not now—all days are fine. There be those who pray for health : I would like to live to be able to pray for health with this supplement to my prayer—Nevertheless, if sickness be better for me, the Lord make me sick every day.

Now the Saviour comes to his last word. Let me ask you to read it. "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets." Who has an eye acute enough in vision to see the connection between this *therefore* and the argument that has gone before? It startled me : I did not know that the argument stretched itself beyond the eleventh verse,—“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more——.” Said I, “The argument ends with that enquiry,” and behold in the twelfth verse I was challenged with a great *therefore*, as if the syllogism did not complete itself until we came to this conclusion—“All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” What has that to do with the subject? “Evidently nothing,” say you. “Evidently much,” says Christ. This is no incoherence on the part of the divine Teacher. He does sometimes startle by taking what are called new departures, but in this *Ergo* he stands steadily by the argument he has been establishing. Let us read it with the intent of discovering his meaning.

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children—the good gifts being indicated in the ninth and tenth verses—what man is there of you whom if his son ask bread will he give him a stone? None. Therefore, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, giving you bread when you ask bread, and not a stone. Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? No. Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, in answer to your prayers, never giving a serpent for a fish, a stone for bread, a scorpion for an egg, do ye even so to them. How would you feel, if asking your father for an egg, he gave you a scorpion? Would he not disqualify himself for the paternal relation? Therefore go by your own judgment, follow

out your own reasoning—if you would not receive a scorpion for an egg, as an act of love and of honour, never perpetrate that bitter and disastrous irony in your own dealings with mankind, for this is the law and the prophets—this is the blossom, this the fruit of all history : it grows up into this, blossoming into love and fructifying into noble charity and honour.”

Does not this seem a small result for so great a prophecy? Did it require thousands of years to grow this tree and to mould and mellow, in complete sweetness, this fruit? What is the fruit? Love. All the law is fulfilled in one word—Love. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. For this the ages have travailed in birth, and this the child—Love. This is the law and the prophets.

Where are you? Still in the region of opinions—still discussing tiny metaphysics, still asking one another about your little narrow hazy theological views? I despise you, if you mean to rest there, chaffering and chattering about your denominational peculiarities and your metaphysical and theological distinctions, your orthodoxy and your heterodoxy, your *isms* and your *ations*. If you are there and still mean to stop there, I want to go on. What to? LOVE. Again and again remember that Love is the fulfilling of the law. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? I am more anxious to cure the disease of your affections than to correct your purely intellectual mistakes. Believe what you may intellectually, if your spirit be not bathed in the very love of God you have not entered into the inner places of the holy kingdom. This blessed love is often the best guide of the intellect. It makes men modest, it prostrates them in the lowliness which is acceptable to God, and it expels from the heart every passion that would contest the supremacy of Christ. I do not call you to brilliance or grandeur of intellect, but I do most strenuously exhort you to follow in the upward direction that is ever taken by the spirit of heavenly love.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, our hearts know thee, and in their deepest love is thy name set as their one jewel and treasure. We cannot understand thee, but we can love thee ; thou dost not come into our intelligence or sit down in our understanding, thou knockest at the door of our heart, and into its love thou dost come with all readiness, bringing with thee all heaven. Our hearts are towards thee to-day in great expectancy, we have assured ourselves that this is thy day, and that thou wilt make a temple of every heart, and sit down with every one of us, and make us see thy life. It is not to such expectancies thou dost return some cold reply, thou dost come with swiftness to hearts that are waiting, for the sigh is contrite and the groan is one because of heavy and intolerable sin ; where the eyes of our hearts are set towards the cross of thy Son, thou dost come with wings outstretched, flying faster than the lightning, that thou mayest heal and comfort and mightily redeem. We come to thee with our love shaped into an earnest prayer, with our heart crying after the living God with infinite desire.

We have tested the poverty of time, we have seen the little boundaries which encircle and imprison us, and our souls are filled with infinite discontent because of the meanness of space and time. We would look beyond, we would be drawn by mighty forces that are above, we would yield ourselves to ministries that have no sufficient name, plying the heart with subtle tenderness, luring the affections with mighty strength, promising our love and our whole capacity an ample and sweet satisfaction in regions beyond the line of time.

We bless thee for thy sacred Book, behold it is written with thine own finger ; we see no human writing in it. Beyond the human scribe we see the divine inspirer, we hear in human words music that is not of earth, we see in the beauty of thy revelation a light that never fell from created suns. Help us to enter into the sanctuary of thy word and richly to enjoy thy revelation, and may our hearts abound with loving thankfulness to thee for putting into our speech something of the meaning and purpose of thine own heart. Help us to read thy book wisely, save us from the narrowness and poverty of the mere letter, may the letter of thy Book be but as a door opening upon boundless spaces and liberties, and may we enter in and enjoy the heritage of a glorious and indestructible freedom.

Thou knowest our life : what is it but a breath in the nostrils, a flying shadow, a dying vapour, a post hastening on his way ?—behold we are as the grass that is consumed in the oven, and in our strength there is no duration, our joys are bubbles upon the stream that burst, and what we gather are but flowers plucked, and that must wither. Help us then to lay up treasure in heaven ; may Christ

be our wealth, may the Son of God be our chief possession : having him in the heart, dwelling in the mind, ruling the will, directing every step of our life, we shall be rich with inexhaustible treasures. Enrich us, thou Son of God.

As for our sin, who may name such blackness? But thou hast light enough to drive it all away. Who dare speak of guilt so deep and dark? But the blood of Jesus Christ thy Son cleanseth from all sin, so where great sin aboundeth grace doth much more abound ; as in the darkness we see the stars, so in our great sorrow, when the tears big and hot fall from our reddened eyes, do thou therein shine upon them a divine light which makes them gleam with many a tender colour. O thou who dost forgive, who hast paid a ransom for men, and whose delight it is to release from the torment and the shame of sin, come to every heart to-day with pardon and its attendant liberty.

Look upon those hairs that are grey, that are bent before thee with the reverence of age, and supply the old man with what he needs of grace and love and help. Thou hast chastened him with many an affliction, thou hast dug many a grave on his life path, thou hast startled him by many a fear—now let the evening be quiet, take the storm out of the clouds and fill them with hopeful light. Look upon all the young men and women full of life and fire, whose every look is an expectation, whose every word is a vow of nobler life, and grant unto such increasing power of prayer, increasing energy to overthrow every temptation. Hide within young hearts thy living word, an eloquence that cannot be answered, a reply to which the devil can return no answer. Look upon the busy man lest he be so busy as to let the King pass by, lest he seek in the dust and find nothing there but a pit for his body. The Lord help us all to earn our bread honestly, give us plenty of it, no more than is good for us ; and as for our house, do thou keep the key of its principal door, and upon the windows pour the smiling light of thy blessing. Be with us in the cradle, be with us in the market-place, be with us in the school and in the church and everywhere, may every step we take be a step in the right direction.

Bless the stranger within our gates, the heart that is far from home, between whose love and the objects of it there roll mighty seas or stretch innumerable miles ; by the spirit of thy love make the fellowship complete, destroy all space and time, and give the joy of spiritual communion.

Send messages from thy heavens to our sick-chambers. Some whom thou lovest are sick, and thou lovest them to be sick because out of their sickness thou wilt work a better health. The Lord be their Physician and their comforter, and a light above the brightness of the sun be in their darkened chambers.

The Lord will not forget the prodigal, the wanderer, the man of the hard heart, those who are invincible by any power of ours—the Lord's hand be upon them, not for destruction, but for salvation, and bring gladness into our hearts by the intelligence that they have arrived at home.

Dry our tears, make our poverty an occasion of thy coming to us, may our blindness be the reason of thine approach, and do thou dwell in us and make us living temples. Amen.

Matthew vii. 13, 14.

13. Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.

14. Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

THE STRAIT GATE.

THIS is rather a mournful view, not only of human life, but of the kingdom of heaven itself; as if it would be thinly populated, and give us at last rather a representation of infinite failure on the one side than of real success and completeness on the other. That, however, would be a wrong exposition of the text. There is more light in it than seems to flash upon the eye at the first look. There is really nothing novel or unintelligible in the principle which is here laid down, namely, that, because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, few there be that find it. We know that to be a true principle in the common walks and ranges of life. It is the principle which applies at home, in the school, in the market-place, everywhere in fact; the principle, that is, that according to the value of any kingdom is the straitness of the gate which opens upon it. If you will accustom the mind to that thought for a moment or two, you will not be struck by any novelty, certainly, by any harshness in the conditions which are attached to entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

Into what kingdom is it that you are anxious now to enter? Above all things you wish to enter into the kingdom of music. Very well. This is the New Testament doctrine concerning the kingdom of music. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto excellence in music, and few there be that find it." You have to study night and day, you have no time for yourself, you are at it, always at it, or getting ready for it, criticising or being criticised, repeating, rehearsing, going over it again and again, still higher and higher. If that is the law of your little kingdom of music, why should it not be the law of the larger kingdom of life, which includes all beauty, and learning, and music, and power? Show me any musician that is ever really and completely satisfied with his own attainment; in that proportion will he be no musician at all—an amateur, easily satisfied with himself. When Handel composed his "Messiah," and sat a long way off to hear it, he came again and again to some of the players upon the wind instruments, and said, "Loudaire;" and again he came and said, "Loudaire," and away he

went, and came again and said, "Loudaire," and at last they said, "Where is the wind to come from?" He wanted all the winds of heaven, and all the thunders that slumbered in the clouds, and all creation to take up his Amen and sing it, till the universe vibrated with its infinite life.

What is the kingdom that you are most anxious to enter into? "I am," say you, "most anxious to enter into the kingdom of painting pictures, the mystery of colour, the language, subtle and infinite, that expresses itself through the medium of colour." Is it easy? You shake your head in despondent reply, and say that you seem to get worse rather than better. At first you were rather pleased, and now you could tear up the canvas—it vexes you by the vulgarity you write upon it with your clumsy fingers. Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto art, and few there be that find it. My young friend, do not imagine that you can jump into eminence: if you can jump into it, you may easily jump out of it. Character must be a growth, long-continued and patiently cultivated. One of yourselves took me into his study the other day, and said, "I want you to look at this sketch." Said I, "This lies a long way from your range of studies." "Yes," was the reply—"my temptation is towards impatience; I get tired of things, and I at the last lump them and hasten them through, becoming utterly careless towards the close. I undertook this work to teach me patience, slowness, and completeness of toil. How long do you think I was over that?" "I cannot tell how long." "I spent upon that, two hours every day, Sundays excepted, for two months." A little thing about the size of the palm of your hand: he could have done it in half the time, but then he would have missed the direct purpose of his attempting to do it. He must straiten the gate and narrow the road, because he wants to go into a kingdom that is worth going into, and there is no kingdom worth having that you can snatch and pocket, and keep without equivalent toil or thought.

Do you want to enter into the kingdom of influence, do you want to be a man that shall be consulted in difficulties, to whom people shall come in hours of perplexed thought, to whom they shall state their cases, and for whose opinion they shall anxiously wait? Influence comes out of time, care, experience, and these things are not to be hurried. A man, well-known to most of us,

is lying sick to-day, and a physician of renown was called in to see him not long ago ; and the doctors, having heard the opinion of this eminent man, declined, one and all, to give his own conception of the case. Why is it so amongst you that if a great physician gives his opinion, you will not give yours ? “ Yes—there is no opinion after his.” The man grows to that—do not suppose that you can dream yourselves to that. Inspiration there is in it, no doubt, but a man has to work for it, and pay for it, and climb his way to it, one round of the ladder at a time. Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto supreme influence, and few there be that find it.

I have troubled you with these illustrations, just to show that really there is nothing novel, extraordinary, or harsh in the principle that, according to the value of any kingdom that you aim to reach, is the straitness of the gate and is the narrowness of the road leading unto it. It is my wont—bear me witness if you please—always to speak a word for the weak man. Have I ever put out a finger and laid it upon any soul as a burden that was trying to be better ? Cheer me by telling, what is only the truth, that I may have erred in excess of charity, never in excess of severity. Comfort me with these words, tell me you have so understood me, and I shall preach to you with a broader and warmer love. I want to do so with peculiar tenderness just now.

Enter ye in at the strait gate—or, as we read elsewhere, strive to enter in at the strait gate, seek to enter in, labour to enter in, agonize to enter in. The fear is that some of you may imagine that striving is conquest, and you may visit upon a man who is merely, though with all his heart, striving to enter in, the judgment that you would accord to him after he had passed the gate, and had walked long miles up the heavenly steep. You have been cruel to some of your friends, you have taunted them with bitter mockery when they have been striving to enter in ; you thought they had already professed to have entered, and you have mocked them with bitterness ; you have asked them if that was their goodness, you have taken up little specks of their life, and said, “ Aha, is this a sample of your piety ? ” It was only a sample of their agony, it was only a pattern of their striving. It was not to be picked up as a trophy of conquest, but to be referred to as an incident in the great agony of striving to enter in.

When the young Christian slips and falls, don't mock him; when a man is labouring, even in agonistic earnestness, to be better, and when in the midst of it all he gets tripped up, and somehow or other falls down as he were dead drunk at your feet, he may be a better man than you are: you never got wrong socially—you may be the worst man alive for anything I know to the contrary, you proud Pharisee, you whitewashed sepulchre, you trick undiscovered—take care lest ye be wounding good men who have the true seed in them, but who, peculiarly constituted, fall twenty times a day, and have the devil's iron teeth crushed—crushed—through them, all over. I do not defend their vices, I sympathise with their weakness; I have known the prayers of such men, and to no other prayers have I ever added so cordial an Amen—prayers that had blood in them, and music subtle and far-brought and far-sounding, prayers of the very inmost soul; and I did not judge them harshly, I saw they were striving to enter in, seeking to enter in, agonizing to enter in, and the measure of their earnestness was the measure of the diabolic assault upon them. If I speak to such hearts now, when possibly I may do so, let my word be one of the broadest cheer, a great sun-like word, brightening upon their lives with infinite hope. Still strive to enter in, and God will be pitiful to you.

But we read that some will seek to enter in and shall not be able. That we read in another gospel than the one we are now expounding. How singular it is then that some shall seek to enter in and shall not be able. Is not this a mockery of human effort? How many persons have been puzzled by that expression, and have gone to their pastors and teachers with it, as men would go with a great pain, and said, "Can you heal this mortal agony? I am discouraged because it says some will seek, yea, many will seek to enter in and shall not be able. I may be one of the many—God help me. Tell me if it is so: I feel this thought darkening upon me like a cloud of thunder." O distressed one, shall I call thee Fool and slow of heart to believe all that the Speaker spake when he uttered these words that give thee trouble? The answer is in the very next verse—When once the master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the doot, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us," and he shall answer and say unto you, "I know you not whence ye are."

The seeking and the knocking referred to, take place when the day of mercy is no more. When the good man of the house has risen up and gone to rest, when Christ is risen from the mediatorial seat and has delivered up the kingdom unto God and his Father, then the shout of agony shall die in space, and the cry of despair shall be the awful music of hell.

The words, therefore, do not apply to you at all. The good man of the house has not risen and shut the door, the Son of God has not completed his priestly ministry, Jesus Christ is still able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, God still waits to be gracious, the door is set wide open, and therefore, the verse which before was a burden to you and a great darkness may now be lifted off your shoulder and chased away, to the last shadow of it, from your life path, for it never referred to any man who earnestly sought the Lord while he might be found, and called upon him while he was near. What say you to seeking now, and striving? What if we make this day the most memorable day in our life by sending the heart out like a living bird to such a rest in God? Let thine heart fly God-ward, poor soul; do thou gather thyself up into one flaming prayer, and say, "God be merciful unto me a sinner," and thy joy shall be too great for words, thy rapture shall leave even music behind it, as the lark leaves under his wings the clouds of the smoking city. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.

"Few there be that find it." Do not judge success by numbers. It is always pleasant to see great numbers gathering round the standard you set up, but always remember that quality is better than quantity, the audience may be fit though few. They are strong men who gather themselves around Christ, for they have nothing to rest upon but inspiration; no property, no ancestry, no fine clothing, no parchments, nothing but the grace of God. Jesus Christ never sought to make his kingdom popular in the sense of bringing into it any and every body that casually applied for admission. A young man once came to him and said, "I would like to enter in at the gate;" and Jesus Christ said, "Why not? This gate is a strait one, and thou knowest the commandments." Said the young man, "All these have I kept from my youth up." A commandment that can be kept is by necessity a very narrow one; a commandment must always overflow its own

letter, if it is really a revelation of the highest morality. The young man measured off the commandments, ten in number, and he said he had kept them, letter by letter, every one, from his youth up. Jesus Christ, closing his eyes that he might see the better, said, "There is an eleventh commandment: sell all thou hast and give it unto the poor, and come and follow me;" and the young man went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. He thought the gate was broad enough surely to admit him and all his wealth-burden; and Christ said, "You cannot all get through: there is room only for the soul, and not for these poor perishable holdings that are of no use on the other side of the gate." So Jesus did not add to his numbers rashly.

Another man said to him, "Lord, I will follow thee, but—" Christ said, "No, that word *but* must be dropped, there must be no qualifications; let the dead bury their dead, come thou and follow me." On another occasion he said, "If any man will follow me, let him take up his cross and come after me. Let a man deny himself and follow me; except a man deny himself he cannot be my disciple." You do not wonder therefore that very few people attach themselves livingly and lovingly to a man whose conditions were so precise and severe. His conditions ought to make us all tremble. Have I denied myself? Where? Have I taken up my cross? What weight is it? Can men see it? Do I feel it? Why, Christianity has been my maker: by the grace of God I am what I am. Christianity, every one of us may say, has made me respectable; I owe all I have to Christianity: I have been a receiver—what have I given? I have held out both hands, what have I returned? Do I not encourage every whim, do I not cultivate every prejudice, do I not give scope to every antipathy, am I not harsh in judgment, uncharitable in feeling, pharisaical in self-sufficiency, scribe-like in my obedience to the mere letter of the law, whilst I neglect its infinite spirit? Such questions as these I could inflict upon myself until I destroyed every whit of comfort and solace that I now enjoy. There is no cross-bearing in being a Christian of the nominal sort: what cross-bearing there would be in being a Christian of the real sort, who can tell? If any man will live godly in Jesus Christ he shall suffer persecution.

When I go into trade and arrange all my business, I say I have

arranged this business on the principle that I must live. Then it is a false principle, for there is no need for you to live. Did that thought ever strike you? There is great need that every man should be honest, but not the slightest necessity in the world that any man, either in the pulpit or out of it, should live an hour. "In making my arrangements and dispositions of energy, and talent, and time, I have always had in full view the fact that I must have subsistence." There is your error: that is the fallacy in your practical logic. What is your subsistence? Who wants that mechanism of bones you call yourself to stand upright for five minutes longer? What do you mean by subsistence? You must have infinite capacity of eating and drinking. Subsistence for how many years? On what scale? Do not even the publicans the same—is not that pagan talk—do not the heathen write such maxims upon their papers and hang them up in their business places as their only Bible? Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but labour for the bread that endureth unto everlasting life.

This is the high gospel of Christ. Who can live it? I cannot, I do not. How then can we classify ourselves? As those who are *striving* to enter in. Sometimes I have tried for a day or two, but with such ample reservation that it destroyed my action so far as I claimed it to be one of faith. Sometimes I have said, "Now I will try the sea." I have gone down to it, and waited till it was very quiet, and then have touched it with one timid foot, and called that trusting the sea—with a friend holding my hand and my other foot well on shore. I have gone down to touch with reluctance that little foaming wavelet that broke on the golden sand. That is not sea-faring, that is not sea-going—but that is my religion in Christ, too much. I speak of myself, lest I should offend any by unnecessary harshness—for if any man has gone a mile out into the water, thank God for him, and let him go a mile further still. Yet I feel as if going down to the water was moving in the right direction, and perhaps some day—who can tell?—I may boldly throw myself on the great wave and be caught by Christ's hand and led to the better land.

Do not let us give up our striving and our seeking, and our persevering—in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not. Try once more, go again—what seest thou? Nothing. Go a third time—what seest thou? Nothing. A fourth time, and a fifth,

and a sixth—what seest thou? A cloud about the size of a man's hand. Hasten—that cloud will spread faster than thou canst run, and presently there will be a plash of descending rain, and the earth shall rejoice in the baptism of the divine blessing.

This is the great lesson of striving, and seeking, and trying, and persevering. "Though faint, yet pursuing"—be that thy motto, my poor soul. The discouragements are innumerable, but the promises are many and large. "He giveth more grace." Try again! Let me summon your utmost hopefulness into exercise, for when we fear we go down in the volume and quality of our being. Hope is power. Hope is inspiration. Hope is one of the guarantees of its own fulfilment. The great and loving One is watching you from his bright heaven, nor will he spare his angels, even should twelve legions be needed, to give you victory and rest. My soul, hope thou in God, and wait for him until his brightness drives the gloom for ever away.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, truly is our life a great mystery, and there is no answer to it in ourselves, but in thy sweet gospel do we find the whole explanation, yea, we find the infinite light. Thou hast set our life strangely so that we know neither the beginning nor the end of it. Thou dost fix our abode, and thou dost determine our lot upon the earth and we are not our own, we are wholly thine. Thou hast made us so that we can sin against thee with both hands and our whole heart, and thou hast so made our life that it can be turned into one joyous and loving prayer—this is the Lord's doing and it is wonderful in our eyes. Surely this life of ours is cruel ; thou dost afflict us sorely, and by many a deprivation dost thou bring us to poverty extreme. Sometimes thou seemest to have no mercy upon the children of men. Thou dost scourge them to the flowing of the blood, and when they turn up their eyes in faint prayer, the sky is dark and sullen. Behold thou dost separate us one from another, and care not for our Farewell ; thou dost dig the grave at the very foot of our pleasure, and in the middle of the feast thou dost blight us with great fears. Yet thou art also full of compassion and loving-kindness : we see it not wholly just now—we see glimpses and sharp glances of thy love, quick lights that flash and flare a moment, and we believe that thou wilt by-and-by explain it all, and show that thou hast done all things well. Thou dost rule us with a rod of iron, and thou dost touch us with a sceptre of love. Thou dost bind us with cords that cannot be broken by human strength, and thou dost give us a great liberty that cannot be measured by human imagination. This is our life, a pain, a joy, a night, a day, a thrilling fear, an inspiring hope.

We bring to thee the robe of the week, fouled and torn, that thou mayest again array us in the white linen of the saints. We have done the things we ought not to have done, we have left undone the things that we ought to have done, and we come without excuse or defence, for thou hast given us light enough to see all the way, and help enough to sustain us against every assault, yet have we utterly failed and there is no white day in our whole life, without scar or blot upon its beauty. God be merciful unto us sinners, and show us the cross, the sacred cross, the infinite cross, the redeeming, healing, hopeful cross, and in the sight of that vision our sin shall be all forgotten.

Thou dost give us a handful of days, and we go to work to spend it as though it were an eternity—such fools are we and so utterly blind. We do not reckon our little store and set it out in lots, saying, "This shall be done to-day and that to-morrow, if the Lord will," but with a ruffian's force and a prodigal's thoughtlessness we rush upon our little dowry of time and spend it without thy fear. How brief a span is our life : our breath is in our nostrils, our little day

is but twelve hours long, and we know not that we shall live the whole time—so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

We bless thee for all Christian light, for all Christian truth and consolation; may thy light shine upon our hearts this day, may thy truth make our understandings strong as a great tower, and thy consolation guard our hearts against destructive fears. Save us from the anxiety that is unchristian, from the care that is the result of unbelief, and that becomes an offence against thy dignity and love—enable us to live as those who love the Saviour and trust the loving-Father, and in whom death is abolished.

Thou seest us as we are gathered and bent here, praying, suppliant, contrite hearts. Omit no one from thy blessing—let the old man feel young again, let the young be startled into a sobriety that may become religious in the long run, let the busy man remember that he can take nothing out of the world into which he brought nothing, and may those who are in affliction, sorrow, secret distress, and mortal pain, sigh what they cannot speak in words, and tell thee the latent breathings of their heart, what they may not speak in the ear of man. The prodigal is here, with his broken staff and his weary feet, and his head dizzy and aching, and his heart broken and crushed—the Lord give him another chance in life, the Lord show him the way back again and give him courage to take it, every step. Amen.

Matthew vii. 15-29.

15. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17. Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

21. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

24. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

25. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

26. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

27. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

28. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine :

29. For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

THE FINAL TEST.

“**B**EWARE of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” Beware of the false in everything: encourage the instinct and spirit of truth—then you will have no need to be instructed as to particulars and details. Be as true as fire, a perpetual disinfectant, a test that can never be deceived. Have in you, ever dwelling in the temple of your heart, the spirit of truth, then you will know the false man the moment you look at him: the detection of falsehood will not be an act of skill or cleverness, but you will shudder when the false man is within a mile of you, as the wind in some parts of the sea has a sudden chill in it because of the far-off icebergs. Beware of the false in everything,—false promises, false directions, false appearances. Then add the word *prophets*, for there is more in the word *false* than there is in the word *prophets*. A man is not a good man simply because he is a prophet: do not trust to the goodness or the nobleness of your office for your personal vindication: you should be bigger than your office—no pulpit on earth should be as grand as you are, no prophet’s robe that ever covered human shoulder should be worth your majesty.

“False prophets.” What ironies there are in speech. To think the word false should ever have been married to the word prophets. Surely that sacred word *prophet* might have escaped this foul contamination. Let the word *false* go wooing elsewhere, let it marry the market-place, but let it keep a thousand miles away from the snow-like purity of the Church of Christ. “False prophets.” Who can imagine two words more positively contradictory? Who can imagine a union so palpably and grossly absurd? Who can effect a junction between two words that shall mean so much that is mischievous, disastrous, ruinous? It required Jesus Christ surely to say the word *false* before the word *prophets*. Surely that word *false* was written in faint ink, and required his eyes of fire to see it. In other cases, it was written large enough: it seemed to boast of its haziness, and to make its

very bigness a kind of satirical virtue ; but in connection with the word *prophets*, who ever found it before ? False professor, false prophet, false teacher, false thinker—it is in that line that lying does its worst mischief.

There is arising amongst us a class of men who are exceedingly anxious not to tell lies in art. It is provocative of secret laughter, and much of it. Solemn persons, who will not allow a painter to tell lies in oil. Yet it is not unbeautiful, and not wholly unsuggestive of things heavenly. Mr. Ruskin would never allow you to paint a piece of wood as if it were oak : such an action would send him half wild. Paint it as black as soot if you like ; paint it a glaring, fiery red ; steep it in amber—but do not imitate oak. To such an art-critic it is a lie, it is a piece of hypocrisy in art, it is not true, and therefore it ought to be frowned out of your houses. You, skilful amateur, have painted a piece of common slate so skilfully that your neighbours suppose it to be marble. Your mother insists that it is marble ; or, at all events, that she never could have told the difference between it and marble. Your neighbours almost go to the length of applauding you as an artist. If one of the class to which I have referred could come into your house and see that painted slate, veined and shaded like a cutting from the rock, he would call it a lie, and your cleverness would be so much set down to your discredit.

Now, whilst I am not able to say much either for or against these purists in art, I have sometimes wondered if it could be possible for a man who would go into a rage about seeing a piece of common deal painted like oak to tell a lie. The swallowing powers of man are painful mysteries to his Creator. I will tell you what a man can do : he can strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. Yet he will not believe in miracles. Who can believe anything with so roomy a throat ? It would seem to swallow up the whole man that he should seem to be nothing but throat. Have you never met in life persons who would almost go into a fit if you were to suggest to them any falsehood in certain directions, who yet could turn right round in pious rage from that suggestion and tell falsehoods of another kind the clock round ?—so curious a creature and irregular and unmanageable is man.

In all ages the false has followed the true. I do not wonder : it is an excellent speculation. In all ages the false has brought

the true into trouble. "Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. They that are such," says the apostle, "serve not the Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." The nearer the false approaches the true, the more dangerous is it. What do you think they are doing now? Making stones which they call *simile* diamonds. Take care. People are now making paste so like diamonds as to deceive the unwary. My wonder is that people who are so anxious along that line of life should exhibit anything but the slightest anxiety in matters of doctrine touching correct thinking and the like. Present them with a false diamond as a true one, and let them find out the mistake, and then—you know the rest. But suggest to them a false idea, a crude and self-contradictory philosophy of the universe, any mad theory of creation you like, and they will call it ingenious, skilful—what a young man once called to me "a clever doubt." Where will be their rage, where their sublime madness, where their fiery and honest indignation?

The fear is that we become technical purists and moral liars. Your life cannot be good if your teaching is bad. Doctrine lies at the basis of life. There may be those who refine upon doctrine and turn it into useless distinction and vexatious definition, but doctrine, teaching, correct idea, lies at the root and core of our life. You are what you believe. You may profess to believe a good many things which you do not turn into life, but in reality what you believe is the very substance and inspiration of your character. How, needful, therefore, that we should be rooted and grounded in it, and saved from perversion and folly, and hold the truth of God with a grip not to be relaxed by the most importunate fingers that try to tear us from our attachment to divine verities.

How are we to know the false from the true? Jesus Christ tells us. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The purist I have been speaking about would be horrified with this kind of preaching; if it were done so by any living man, he would write a paragraph in the newspaper about it; he would say, "The preacher in such and such a church is the most remarkable character for mixed metaphor that probably ever lived. That we may not be apparently speaking to his disadvantage without reason, let us cite the following example." Then in small type

would come, "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" He was talking about a wolf, and now he is talking about grapes and figs and thistles. The teaching of the great teacher, whoever he is, is full of ellipses. He thinks more rapidly than he can speak: words cannot keep pace with his intellectual velocity. This is pre-eminently the case with all the teaching of the New Testament. The lacunæ, or gaps, and breaks, are innumerable, and only the man who wants to find the truth can find it amid many of the statements which are of the figurative or metaphorical kind. If you really want to know what Christ means in this case, do not trouble yourselves with the rapidity with which he changes the metaphor; but, with an honest and sober heart, look at the case, when he says, "By their results shall ye know them." So then a false teacher may require a little time for self-revelation. The nearer he approaches the truth the longer time may he require fully to disclose his doctrine and his purpose. The hand may be the hand of Esau, the voice may be the voice of Jacob: it is difficult for the false hand to get a false voice, and for the false voice to get a false hand: nature is set against such conjunctions, and will not afford facilities for the completion of lies.

Jesus Christ submitted to his own test. His words are, "Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of these works do you stone me?" And, again, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in him." Judge all preaching by its results, judge all doctrine by its effects. My young friend, let me speak soberly and with great breadth of persuasiveness and sympathy to you upon this subject. The doctrine to which you have been listening recently in various places seems to you to be brilliant—you are enamoured, you are under a spell, you say the doctrine seems to refute all other doctrine, and to be bright with new hopes. You are now in the intellectual period. How does the doctrine come down into life? What does it make of its believer?—is it a painted cloud to be gazed at and wondered about like an apocalypse in the air, or is it an inspiration that

expresses itself in charity, love, patience, forbearance, sympathy, and that compels to honourableness of conduct? My first question about any doctrine is—How does it come downstairs out of its dreamer's intellect and behave itself in the kitchen?—how does it put on its apron and tuck up its sleeves and go to life's daily work?—how does it go into the chamber and hush itself into gentleness and quietness, and what does it say to the pained heart, and what to the ebbing life? By its fruits let it be known: What it can do in the plain, every-day circles of life shall be its proofs to me of its heavenly origin. It requires God to make himself of no reputation, and do earth's lowest, humblest work. I ask you not, therefore, how much your doctrine titillates your intellect, inflames and pleases your fancy; I ask you how it comes down to the counter and pays its bills?—How it stands by a man when all hell seems to be against him in huge and terrible assault on his integrity and his peace? The rainbow is to me most beautiful, but I cannot live upon it.

Now we come to a remarkable passage, in which the tone of the great Preacher changes with some suddenness—the twenty-first verse to the twenty-third inclusive. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” That is a new tone in the sermon—Lord, Lord. Why, whoever thought of saying “Lord, Lord” to the carpenter's son? Inflamed by the passion of his own rhetoric he has started up into lordship. We never thought of calling thee Lord, poor Peasant. It is a matter of consideration amongst some of us why certain men should be called “Mr.” at all. Think of that, that we solid-headed Englishmen make a matter of enquiry as to whether certain persons should be called “Mr.” And then a very acute subject, rising into a kind of social agony, is as to whether certain persons can properly be called “Esquire.” These are the mighty problems that tear and vex our nineteenth century utterly now and then. Here is a man who began life in a manger, and whose parents absconded suddenly into Egypt and wandered about homelessly for some time, who says that at a certain time people will be calling him “Lord, Lord,” and he will not know them. It is in these subtle touches that I find the true quality of my Teacher's character.

"Many will say to me in that day." What, and is he to be Judge as well as Lord? Is he to be the Arbitrator as well as the Teacher? What a forecast, what an assumption, how high the ground on which he stands. If it be not a rock, he will fall off, and we shall hear no more of him.

"But he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Is he not *our* Father which is in heaven? Yes, mediately, not immediately. Through a priestly intercession, not by right of filial obedience and uncorrupted and incorruptible love.

"Many will say unto me, Have we not prophesied in thy name?" There he feels the throbbing of his own almightiness: he feels already that his name is to be a charm in the world: thus early he forecasts the marvels that will be wrought in his name. Men will wear it as an amulet, speak of it as a charm, offer it as a certificate, wear it as a seal and an endorsement. This he said not after ten centuries' experience, but at the very beginning of the beginning. How true it is let time testify.

"Then will I say unto them, Depart from me." What, then, does he make heaven, and does he make hell; and is everything to be determined by his will, and have we all to be subjected to this criticism and to undergo his judgment? All this is most fully involved in the statement we are now perusing.

Now I see what it meant when he went up into a mountain. He speaks as if he were on a mountain. I wondered why he withdrew to that height; he explains it in the conclusion of his sermon. Why the sermon itself is a mountain, in shape, in bulk, in dignity; beginning with the gentle slopes of the beatitudes, easy, vernal slopes, green with spring's own loveliness, he passes on to rugged places, modified Sinais, stony, rough, rugged places that would affright us but for the light of his smile which falls upon them—and on he goes, higher and higher in his doctrine, he rises to high challenges and new proclamations, and now the sermon culminates in lordships and supremacies which overlook and dominate the whole earth. We saw him by the quiet river, we watched him driven into the bleak wilderness, we saw him walking by the seaside; now we behold him seated upon a mountain—a culmination in very deed, an upgathering of all that went before, and a place whence he projected himself across the whole abyss of time. Henceforward Jesus takes the name of Lord; henceforward

"these sayings of mine" are to be the root and core of the only durable philosophy, and henceforward men are wise or foolish according as they build or build not on Christ.

Now we see why he chose the mountain; no other pulpit would have been worthy of such a discourse, no scaffold of man's making could have borne that infinite weight, no platform of human erection could have supplied base enough for the projection of such teaching. Great husbandman, on the top of the mountain, thou dost scatter a handful of corn; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon and the cities of the plain shall rejoice in its abundance.

NOTE.

Beware of false prophets (ver. 15).—"It has been much disputed whether by the *false prophets* are meant Jewish or Christian teachers, and by their *fruits* false doctrines or evil lives. Perhaps neither distinction should be pressed too closely. The whole discourse relates to the Messiah's kingdom, and the false prophets will naturally mean those who lead men away from that kingdom, whether professing Christians or not. The term will thus include both the false Christs predicted in chap. xxiv. 5, 24, and the wolves foretold by St. Paul as entering into the Church (Acts xx. 29). The latter are more particularly specified in verses 21, 22. There is nothing, however, in the context to suggest strictly Jewish teachers, such as the Scribes and Pharisees, who seem rather excluded by verse 22. In like manner it has been disputed whether by these wolves in sheep's clothing are meant persons of pure lives but unsound doctrine, or those of orthodox doctrine but evil lives. Here again there seems to be no *exclusive* reference to either. The *sheep's clothing* implies the appearance and profession of a religious teacher abused to evil purposes, whether in matters of doctrine or of practice; and the *fruits* by which they are to be known will include whatever is contrary to the teaching of Christ in the one respect or in the other. Teaching as well as practice is included among the fruits of the heart (cf. chap. xii. 32-37; Luke vi. 45; with chap. xv. 18, 19), and it is of false teaching that St. Paul uses similar words (2 Cor. xi. 13-15). The 'fruits,' therefore, must include, not merely the fruits of their lives, but, as Bishop Sanderson says, 'the necessary consequence of their doctrines, such conclusions as naturally and by good and evident discourse do issue from their doctrines' (Sanderson's Works, vol. i., p. 244)."—*The Speaker's Commentary*.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, for every gentle promise of thine our hearts would bless thee. We need thy tenderest word, for the wounds in our life are vital, and there is no recovery for the soul of man but by the healing which thou dost supply. We are wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, and there is no health in us : we have destroyed ourselves, but in thee is our help. This we say to ourselves when we are most sober minded, and see most clearly into our real condition in the sight of heaven. Sometimes we delude ourselves, and by many a pretence do we seek to mislead divine judgment : we wash our hands with soap and nitre, and we think that therefore our hearts must be clean : we robe ourselves in white linen as if we clothed the spirit with the snow of absolute holiness, but now and again we see into our own corruption and it frightens us with a great terror, for in us there is no health—we are charnel houses, we are dead souls, we are corrupt and pestilent in thy sight, and we annoy heaven by our very breathing.

To whom shall we come but unto the living One for life, and to the eternal for the extension of our duration? We hasten to the cross, we flee with feet of lightning to thy side, thou wounded One, Emmanuel, the God-Man. Thou didst never cast out the contrite seeker, thou didst never say “No” to the broken heart : when streaming eyes have been turned to thee thou hast poured upon them the light of thy smile, and made even the tears of sorrow beautiful. We all come to thee with great piercing cries of want, sharp and ringing utterances of agony, principally saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner ;” and we wait with one grand expectation for thine infinite answer of pardon and peace through the blood of the Lamb. Amen.

Matthew vii. 24-29.

24. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock :

25. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell not : for it was founded upon a rock.

26. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand :

27. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell : and great was the fall of it.

28. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine :

29. For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SERMON.

WE have, as you are aware, gone verse by verse through all the preceding chapters in the gospel by Matthew. We began with the words, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham," and from time to time we have pursued a consecutive study of the gospel by Matthew, and we have now come to the close of the Sermon upon the Mount. My object to-night is to review the Sermon upon the Mount as a whole, having already perused it sentence by sentence and commented thereupon.

It is a very common question which men ask of one another, "What did you think of the sermon to-day?" It is that question which I intend to answer, the sermon being the Sermon upon the Mount and the Preacher being the Son of God.

Looking at the sermon as a whole, I will take it for granted that you ask me what I, having heard the sermon, thought of it. Let me tell you first of all, how much I was struck with the omissions of the sermon. I am told that a sermon is right in proportion as it begins with the creation of man and steadily pursues its heavy way through all human history, and sums itself up by the events of the day of judgment. If that is a correct interpretation of a sound and good sermon, then the sermon delivered upon the mount must be regarded as being most remarkable for its serious omissions. I am not aware that the Preacher has ever referred to the existence of Adam. To the best of my recollection, there is not one solitary word in the sermon about what took place in Eden, and the terms "original sin" are not to be found in the discourse from beginning to end. Nowhere did the Preacher say, to the best of my recollection, "You are wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, and there is no health in you;" never once did he say, "All ye like sheep have gone astray, ye have turned every one to his own way;" in no instance did he say, "There is none righteous, no not one; God looked down from heaven to see the children of men, and behold if there were any that did good, and lo there was none that served him with a perfect heart." How then?

In the next place I am struck by the utter absence of what we call now-a-days Evangelical Doctrine. There is nothing here

about the blood of Christ, there is nothing here about the Cross of Calvary, there is nothing here about believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, as that word is evangelically interpreted and applied. There is here nothing of the doctrine of grace, nothing of the doctrine of justification by faith, nothing of the grand savoury doctrine of the assurance of adoption into the family of God. The Preacher himself calls his discourse a set of Sayings. Where is orthodoxy? where is grace? where is faith? where is election? where is assurance? where is a single element that is denoted amongst us to-day as evangelical? where is unction? So far, I think, I could justify myself in every sentence I have uttered by the letter that is now spread open before me in the sacred volume. And yet it would be only a justification in the letter, for every one of the grand doctrines I have now referred to, though not specifically named in the discourse, is absolutely and profoundly assumed as the basis of the entire utterance. So mistaken may we be when we hear preachers: we bind them too severely to the mere letter: if we do not hear our favourite set of terms and tones exactly as we have always heard them, the temptation is to feel and to suggest that the preacher is not preaching the grand old doctrine by which we obtained our personal salvation.

Now the reality of the case is that this Sermon upon the Mount could not have been preached if man had not fallen from his first estate. The language would have been an unknown tongue, the doctrine would have been without application and point to any living creature. Jesus Christ takes human history as he finds it: he addresses the human nature that is before him, and I ask you to lay your finger upon a single point in his discourse that would have been appropriate if there had not taken place, some time in human history, a total collapse of human integrity. We must allow our preachers therefore some latitude of expression, we must allow that some things are to be taken for granted; we really must not insist on having in every discourse a correct and formal statement of all our theological beliefs and doctrines; we must seize human history as it actually is, we must modernise some antique expressions, and must mint again some grand old words and turn them into the coinage and the currency of our present phraseology. Be careful how you take away the reputation or

character of any man for not being evangelical. Such persons as I now refer to might have taken away the reputation of the Son of God himself by confining their attention strictly to the narrow letter. Rely upon it that the evangelical doctrine is to be found sometimes under apparently uncouth forms of expression. Now and again the rocks of our thinking may be reddened with unseen blood, the blood of Jesus Christ himself, whilst we who only see imperfectly what is taking place, may blame the preacher for want of evangelical grace and unction and pathos.

Suppose a man should say to a student, "In order to be a sea captain, you must be able to take the latitude and the longitude of a ship at sea. That is one thing which you must be able to do." What would you think of that young student turning round and saying to his father, "This teacher ignores great fundamental truths: he never said a word to me about the first four rules in arithmetic—do you call that orthodox direction and calculation? He uses long, fine words: he says I must be able to take the latitude and the longitude of a ship at sea—is that fundamental teaching? The man ignores the very root and base of arithmetical reckoning." How would you esteem such a criticism? Surely as a piece of blatant folly: for how can any man take the latitude and longitude of a ship at sea if he is ignorant of the first four rules of arithmetic? To be able to do it assumes all previous knowledge and training. The teacher states results rather than processes, and this form of teaching must sometimes be allowed to the pulpit. Jesus Christ speaks to human nature as he finds it; he takes human history for granted, and he lets his gracious words fall upon the hearing of mankind to be received, adopted, and applied according to the personal conditions and requirements.

If you ask me again what I thought of the Sermon on the Mount when I heard it, I should say how much struck I was by the infinite wisdom and tact of the preacher, in beginning just where his audience was prepared to begin. Instead of coming with some high-flown morality, of which the world had never heard before, he said, "What are your maxims? How far have you gone in the Book already?" And when they said to him, "We have come up to this point, namely, Thou shalt not kill," he said in effect "Very well; so far so good. But that is a rough and vulgar

morality that hardly begins to be morality at all ; it is a very little way beyond the merest barbarism. It is a little from it, and so far it is upon a right line—but I say unto you, Ye shall not be angry with your brother without a cause. How far have you got upon the line of civilisation ?” The answer is, “ Thus far, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy.” Jesus Christ says, “ You must alter your doctrine upon the latter point : I say unto you, Love your enemies.”

Still the point to be noted is this, that Jesus Christ took morality as he found it, began where the people were prepared to begin. He took upon him the form of a servant and became such to their ignorance : he made himself of no reputation—instead of talking in a high-flown language which the people could not understand, he took their germs and elements of morality and civilisation, and carried them onward to their proper development and culmination.

This is the right method of teaching, this is the philosopher’s plan. If I want to teach a child, I must ask the child where he can begin—I must not play the great scholar with my little pupil, I must lay aside my intellectual divinity, and be born in the child’s place. I must make myself of no reputation, and find little words for my little hearer, and begin the race where his little feet can begin to run. The child looks at his alphabet, and his face, his eyes, his mouth, round into a great wonder, not unmarked by a peculiar trace of distress, for he thinks it impossible that he can ever make friends with such monstrous-looking figures. What have I to do ? To sympathise with his distress, to tell him that once upon a time I was quite frightened, and that little by little I got to know them, and that now we are the best friends in the world. Then I say to my little hearer, “ You have not got to tackle the whole six-and-twenty at once, you have got to take them one by one. Now we will drop the other five-and-twenty and see what we can do with the first one.” Is that the man I have heard talk in polysyllables and in long and well-connected sentences, and who has endeavoured to work his way up into high climax and ringing appeal in the hearing of the great congregation ? Yet he is talking so to that little child—why ? Simply because he is a little child. If I were to talk so to a man, I would talk below the occasion, I would not rise to the height of my responsibility. Jesus

Christ therefore says in effect, "Where can you begin? You begin at, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt hate thine enemy, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth—now hear me." And then he proceeds to unwind and disclose the superior revelation, and to lead his disciples onward, little by little, from height to height, until they are all on the mountain with him together, a happy, thankful, well-instructed band.

And yet there are dangers about that method of teaching. It is God's method in the Bible, and he has gotten himself well affronted for it; every pigmy who could double up his fist has smitten God in the face for adopting that kind of teaching. Persons have written books in contravention of Mosaic history, Mosaic science, Mosaic archæology, geology, and many other ologies with awkward names. Well, now, how does all this intellectual opposition arise? Here are men with sharp eyes and pointed fingers gathered around the first chapter of the book of Genesis, and they are saying, "How can this be?" not knowing that God spake to men as children, and as they were able to hear it. He, in effect, said, what Christ said upon the mount, "How far have you come?" Men talked about the sun rising and the sun setting—it seemed as if it did. A man said, "I saw the sun in the East, and I watched and waited, and I saw him sink in the West; so the sun rises and the sun sets." And the Lord said, "So be it; that is your conception of the astronomy of the universe; then let us begin there and say the sun rises and the sun sets, and let us talk as if that were really so."

And again, they say, "How can all this take place in a day?" The Lord spoke to those to whom he was speaking in the only language they could understand. What is a day? Twelve hours? Nothing of the kind. Four-and-twenty hours? Nothing of the sort. That is only one kind of day. *Day* is a long word, a broad word, a strange word, spreading itself out over great spaces. Why, you say, "Every dog has its day;" you say, "I must preach to the day"—what mean ye? That I must preach to every twelve hours the clock ticks off? You know that you have no such meaning, and yet now that God gave us these infantile lessons because we were in an infantile state of mind, we go up to him and say, "What did you mean by talking to us about the sun rising and the sun setting, when the sun never does anything of

the sort? And what did you mean by saying this and that were done in one day when there are only four-and-twenty hours in the day, and part of that must be spent in sleeping?"

Why it is just like this: you gave your little boy at four or five years of age a rocking-horse, and when he is four-and-twenty he comes to you and says, "What did you mean by so insulting me—giving me a rocking-horse—what did you mean by giving a man a thing like that, a dead piece of wood, a painted horse—what did you mean by giving a man such a gift?" Suppose you had such an idiot son, what would you say to him? You would say, "My boy, it was not given to the man, it was given to the child; it was not given to five-and-twenty years of age, it was given to a five-year-old infant: it was not intended that you should always be on the rocking-horse, it was a hint, a suggestion, something to be going on with—the only thing you could then use. It was adapted to the then state of your mind, and all this abuse you are now pouring upon me is utterly undeserved and beside the mark."

So there are persons who still reckon the Bible in its letter only; they have not seen into the inner meaning, their religious imagination has never been inflamed, they know nothing of the holy passion, the secret heart-unction which breaks a loaf into a feast for thousands, and which finds in one cup of water wine enough for a life's long drinking. O, my friend, thou art a personal letter, locked up in the little gaol of some literal verse. I heard of a person the other day who thinks that she ought not to pray unless her head is covered. To think of the eternal Father of us all looking down to see if you, dear old mother, or young sister, have got your head covered before you say, "Our Father which art in heaven." So, to meet the circumstances of the case, not always having an umbrella at her disposal, she puts a pocket-handkerchief on her head in order to accommodate the infinite Jehovah. Would you believe that such idiocy were possible in the nineteenth century?

This is the difficulty of the preacher: he cannot get his hearer or student away from the letter. The student will not sow the seed of the letter and let it grow into the fruit of the spirit. "No, no" says he, "I have got this seed: I am not going to part with it," and he is thought to be very tenacious of the truth, he is reported to be exceedingly attached to the old truth. The man

who takes his handful of corn called the biblical letter and sows it in his consciousness, sows it in his imagination, sows it in his heart, sows it in every part of his nature, and lets it grow in the sunshiny blessing and the dewy baptism of heaven until it blooms into verdure and blossom and beauty and culminates in fruitfulness, is the man who uses the Bible in the right way. It was so the Son of God used it: he met us where we could be met, he took us by the hand as little children, and he left us under the ministry of God the Holy Ghost to grow in grace, to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, to grow in that subtle, loving sympathy which sees God and touches him and holds him with a heart grip for which there are no words. Hast thou attained that height in the divine life? Then truly art thou born again, and truly are thine ears circumcised to hear the inner music of the celestial word.

You have asked me what I thought of the sermon as a whole: now I should like to know what Jesus Christ himself thought of it. The preacher has an estimate or an opinion of every sermon which he is permitted to proclaim. I cannot but wonder therefore what Christ's own opinion of his discourse was, and happily we have a reply to that inquiry. He treated his sayings as fundamental; he said, in effect, "These are foundation stones, these are not fine things to put on the top of the capital, these are great rough, unhewn rocks to build on." We like polish in our modern preachers; in fact we have gone so far as to say of certain preachers, that they are extremely finished—which is painfully true. Jesus Christ laid foundations: he himself is revealed to us as a rock, and we may say of those who do not follow us, "Their rock is not as our rock, our enemies themselves being judges. He is a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, elect, tested by every means at the divine disposal." That is the kind of preacher we ought to hear every now and then, and though we do, now and again, hear a man who is in every sense of the term most finished, we should again and again for our soul's bettering and rousing hear a kind of preacher that is fundamental, that brings us back to the rock, that puts a test into the base we are building upon, and that says, "Either this is rock or this is mud—sand. Beware."

He also regarded his sayings as supplying an indestructible

basis of life. The rain descended, and the winds blew, and beat upon the rock-founded house, and it fell not. Like foundation, like building, Jesus Christ thus gave his hearers assurance of durability, strength, protection, indestructibleness, immortality. I cannot see the foundation of this building; it looks well as an edifice, its proportions, its decorations, its defences are excellent, so far as my eye can judge, but what the foundation is I cannot tell. So it is with many a human life. Many a man talks to me of whom I form an excellent opinion. He looks well, he speaks well, his appearance is all that can be desired, but what his foundation is I do not know. Do not be content with appearances, nor satisfied with mere external decoration. If you are going to build me a house, I say, "Be sure first of all about the foundation: never mind about the decoration, let me know that the house is well founded, do not tell me that the drawing-room is well papered. Mere decoration I can take in hand little by little, as I may be disposed to expend money upon it, but the foundation once laid, who can get at it again?"

Both the houses had trial. The rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon both houses. So I have heard men say, "Well, it seems to me as if you Christian people had quite as many trials as other folks." So they have. I have heard you say, "It seems to me as if being religious did not save you from trouble, for really you seem to have just as much to contend with as I have, and I make no profession of religion." So it is. What is the result? Everything depends upon the foundation: if your foundation is not right, I do not care how high your building is, or how it is decorated, or how put together. I do not care if it is pinnacled all over with gold, all but piercing the clouds—it will come down, and great will be the fall of it. I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay tree, yet he passed away, and lo, he was not, yea, I sought him but he could not be found.

What is your foundation? Are you resting upon the eternal Son of God; are you resting upon Christ? You shall be saved, for the foundation is safe. Your house is a very odd one, my friend; I never look at it with any pleasure; you are peculiar, crotchety, odd-minded, eccentric, extremely impracticable, and very few people care to visit you or sympathise with you—but

you shall be saved, for the foundation is elect, precious, tried, laid in Zion by hands divine.

On the contrary, here is a man that I like very much ; I like his look, his voice, his culture, I go with all his aspirations and sympathies of a social, civilizing, and literary and elevating kind. So far as this world is concerned, he is a beautiful and noble soul to all outward seeming, but he has no foundation except a foundation of sand. Then your rejoicing is but for a time : so long as health continues and business is prosperous and all around you is sunny, men will praise you and believe in you—but there is a *trying* time coming. I know it will come upon you : you are broad-chested, heavy-boned, full-blooded, nobly built from a physical point of view, and it would seem as if death could never strike such a target. But he will—that great thunder voice shall be contracted into a whining whisper, that great strong frame shall be bent down like a broken bulrush, the time will come when you will be thankful for the most menial service which your most menial servant can render you. The time will come when the window that used to be a blaze of light will be darkened and there will be a shadow upon it, grim as a skeleton. Then the quality of the man will be discovered : in that hour it were well to know the Son of God, the sweet Jesus, the infinite Saviour the bleeding Lamb.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we bless thee that thou hast sent thy Son to our broken-heartedness, our mourning, our unutterable distress and fear. Thou didst not send him to our greatness and power, but to our littleness and weakness and utter insufficiency. The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost—we bless thee for this, for in that word “lost” we find our own true state. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way, there is no man to stand up before thee and challenge thy righteousness—each of us puts his hand upon his mouth and his mouth in the dust, and says, “Unclean, unprofitable, unworthy.” We see Jesus Christ, the Man we need, the Angel of the covenant, the Minister of light and hope, the Priest who offers his blood. Thou dost no longer require at the hands of man the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop—there is a fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness, and to that fountain we now repair. Lord, meet us every one, and give us cleansing of heart, sanctification of thought and will and purpose and hope, and make us without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, complete in thine own holiness, beautiful with thine own light.

Thou hast been with us in the days that are gone, thou hast given us indeed to see the grave, but the tomb has been in a garden: we would look at the garden rather than at the grave, for all that sleep in Christ are roots that shall blossom and come to great fruitfulness in thine own heavenly harvest. O thou, who dost sow the earth with the dead, thou wilt surely put in thy sickle and reap, and the harvest shall live for ever.

Thou hast smitten us sorely, and thou hast mingled some of our cups so bitterly that we shrink from tasting them, for surely they are full of what men call death—but thou hast strengthened us to drink those cups even to the dregs, and in the drinking of them there has been health. Thou hast led the blind by a way that they knew not; thou hast holden our eyes sometimes that we might not know thee, that we might accost thee as a stranger, and tell thee our complaint, in the bitter tone of despair. Thou hast dealt wondrously with us, our hearts have been ungrateful, our eyes have been quick to see the disadvantages of life, but our vision has been slow to discern the beauty of the divine presence, and the certainty of the divine way. We will fill our mouth with mourning because our heart is full of accusation, and each of us will say, “God be

merciful unto me a sinner," for every breath is evil and there is a taint even in our prayers. Keep us evermore at the Cross, bind us to the sacrifice offered thereupon ; other hope we have none, out of that great darkness there streams a startling light, and out of that infinite woe there comes infinite reconciliation. Help us to find in the Son of God, God the Son, and all that our hearts ever need.

Do thou undertake for us all the remainder of our days. What are they but a handful ? We are as a hireling whose day is dying : the Lord help us to count with miserly care all the remaining moments, and may each of them be spent in thy sight and fear. Our grave is already dug, death is waiting for us, behold his sword is lifted up in the air and it awaits thy bidding that it may fall. Spare us yet a little longer, that we may serve thee with a more glowing love, with a more faithful diligence, and with a more joyous success. The Lord help us in all things to be true, honourable, and good, pure and wise—the Lord set his seal upon us that we may be claimed by none other. In the day when the wind is strong, do thou shelter us with thine own hand, in the time when the road is steep and difficult, do thou surround us with thy defences and encourage us by all thy tender promises, and under all circumstances may thy will be our joy, in thy purposes may we find our souls rest, and hiding ourselves in the sanctuary of thy wisdom and goodness, may grace, mercy, and peace fill our hearts with a holy calm.

Pity those who have no pity upon themselves, whose life is a daily self-laceration and self-loss : speak to the man who is far away from the light and house of God, and bring him near by the gracious compulsion of love. Send messages to our sick ones, and bid the most timid hope again. Thou knowest what messages to breathe in the ear that is closing to the voices of time, thou knowest what gospel will fall most gently on the failing and sinking heart of man. We commit all our loved ones to thy tender care—whom thou watchest are well watched, thou shepherdly, fatherly, motherly God.

Have of Thy holy keeping all for whom we ought to pray : the bereaved and the desolated, those who are spending their first Sabbath as widows and orphans and lonely ones, who are feeling the cold of a great emptiness, the bitterness of all that death can bring to bear upon our poor trembling life. Let thy consolations abound where afflictions have had their way, and let all thy tenderest solaces spread themselves over the lives that have been desolated and blackened by severe bereavement.

The Lord speak comfortably to every heart, bring back the old man's youth, speak to those who are in trouble, saying that afflictions do not spring out of the dust. Hear the glad song of human thankfulness, listen to the bitter reproaches of self-accusation, and hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling-place, and when thou hearest, Lord, forgive. Amen.

Matthew viii. 1-4.

1. When he was come down from the mountain great multitudes followed him.

2. And behold there came a leper (Lev. xiii., xiv.) and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean (the disease was not contagious).

3. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will ; be thou clean. And immediately * his leprosy was cleansed.

4. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man : but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

GREAT ELOQUENCE SUPPORTED BY GREAT BENEFICENCE.

“**W**HEN he was come down from the mountain.” The great *speech* had been made, the grand propagation of new ideas had begun, a wondrous intellectual apocalypse had been opened, charming and dazzling the inner vision with all its mystery of separate yet blended colours, and now the great *action* is commenced. Herein you have the hemispheres of Christianity : it is a great speech, and it is also a great healing : it is an eloquent *word* and it is an eloquent *practice*. It requires the mountain from which to project its great deliverances of an intellectual and spiritual kind : it does not exhaust itself by that exercise, it has not only strength enough left to come down the mountain, but having descended from the mountain and entered into the city, it has strength, sympathy, patience, tenderness, and every other requisite for the healing and the redemption of man.

Wonderful is that word in the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, wherein Christ, forecasting the ages, says, “The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath sent me to preach the gospel to the meek, he hath sent me to the broken-hearted, to them that mourn, and to those that are in captivity.” Jesus Christ did not come to the Scribes and to the Pharisees, the Son of man did not come to our intellectual capacity and self-contented sufficiency ; he came to the meek and lowly and broken-hearted and mourning and captive, and unless we be in one or other of these conditions the Son of God will speak to us an unknown tongue ; we shall not recognise one syllable in all his gospel ; it will shoot over our heads as a light not meant for our darkness. But if we be in the condition described in the words given in the prophecy of

* “Our Lord performed his first miracles immediately, that he might not appear to have had any difficulty in performing them : but after he had established his authority, he frequently interposed a delay salutary to men.”—*Bengel.*

Isaiah, then every word he speaks will be a word to us, the very word we need, the only word as it would seem that the heart could possibly understand. We determine by our moral condition what the gospel is to be to us. Given a right state of heart, and every hymn will lift you to heaven, every petition in the prayer will broaden and gladden your life, but given a wrong state of the heart, proud, self-sufficient, self-contained, unconscious of guilt, wanting in contrition and compunction, and God's own word would be to you an idle tale, ill-pronounced and pointless.

“When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him, and behold there came a leper.” What is the meaning of this startling distinction? Why not have included the leper in the multitudes? Why this broad plural and this sharp singular together? It is always so: both these relations to Christ are right; man never knows himself really and truly till he has been both part of a multitude and set aside in his absolute and untouched personality. You say you can read the Bible at home and therefore need not come to church. No. There is a church-reading, and you cannot have it at home. There is in you a multitudinous element which can only be recognised and satisfied in the great congregation. There is also another side to your nature: you must separate yourself from the multitude and be nobody but yourself, frightened of yourself, so much yourself as to be a fear and a terror and a distress, because of the pressure of your want and the infinite hideousness of your personal transgression. It is good sometimes to be in the religious crowd; we are then dispossessed of some littlenesses that cling to the best of us. The mere friction, the subtle sympathy, the feeling that man is larger than any single individual—these have a peculiar influence upon the rightly-constituted mind, giving it solemnity, nobility, dignity, setting it in its right relation and perspective and colour. “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is.”

Yet there came a leper. The leper always makes room for himself. There are some men that cannot be pluralised, they have a whole corner to themselves. It is marvellous into what little bulk even a great multitude can shrink when a leper comes near. You thought there was no room before; let a leper come,

and the space on which the multitude can stand is much lessened. Every one of us is a leper, but not yet known to be such. You would not be allowed to sit where you are now if your real character was known. Every man must feel his own leprosy and go with his own prayer, and pierce the multitude, and get through it to have his own interview with the Son of God. We are not saved in great swelling crowds; we must go one by one, and each state his own case in his own words to the only healer of human life. I need not teach you a prayer: lepers are mighty in prayer. Leprosy kindles wit, leprosy sharpens a man's tongue into a keen accent, leprosy teaches brief speech, but ringing and telling, without one waste word, ear-piercing and making God himself hear. Leprosy batters upon heaven's door with a violence that God never neglects.

A sweet prayer, a full, tender prayer is the leper's—"Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Go and stand beside the publican, that other leper, and hear his prayer—"God be merciful unto me a sinner." Go beside that cross where the better thief dies, and hear his prayer—"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." A prayer in a sentence you have in each case; not a long argument, and yet you could sooner add a beam to the sun than you could add one touch of beauty to this prayer. The leper was no literary man; he was not skilled in phrase-cutting, and in word-setting; he was no clever lapidary, cunning in giving facets to words, that they might catch the light and throw it back again most beautifully—his only teacher was his heart. When will men listen to that great teacher, the hot heart, wild in misery, mad with despair, almost in hell because of self-compunction? There are times when our life does not sharpen itself into this most leprous necessity, and at those times we need longer prayers. Then we may need the help of our friends to write prayers for us or to pray with us. There are times when we want longer communion with God; when he says, "Come up to the mountain early in the morning and meet me on the top." And when we do not leave the mountain till the sun has just light enough in it to light us down the long stairway again, then we may need many words, and beautiful, quivering with sacred life, glittering with celestial beauty, musical with heavenly tunefulness—wondrous words, almost divine, as if they

would totalise themselves into one verb. You have had such experience, you have been part of a multitude, and you have been suddenly turned out of it and made to stand alone before the Christ. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, let me say again ; and let me further add, have hours and half-hours in which there is nobody with you in the sanctuary, when you are alone in it, yet not alone, for the Father is with you.

The leper teaches us a beautiful prayer. We will omit his own personal petition and put in our own—his introduction will do for any prayer. “Lord, if thou wilt.” Every man has to fill up the form with his own cry. Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me *strong*: I am weak, I am a child of infirmity ; my bones ache, my knees smite one another with feebleness and terror ; I hardly live, my life is a burden or a pain—if thou wilt, thou canst make me strong. Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me *happy*. I am hardly ever happy ; I dare not be happy, for fear a moment's gladness should bring back the pain with increased poignancy. I am as those who are afflicted and who dare not sleep because the waking again is intolerable agony. Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me *rich*—nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.

Sorrow turns instinctively to the supernatural. I would not listen to a strong, robust, rude man talking to me about the supernatural. He knows nothing about it ; he never needed it so far as his bodily sensitiveness or necessity is concerned. Go and argue with the leper : tell him that the supernatural is not accessible, tell him to go to the ordinary physician, reason with him upon the vanity and the uselessness of religious expectation. Will he hear your prating ? What is it that breaks through every argument in the time of its intolerable fire, its pain, its agony, its heart-ache ? Go and tell the mother who is just lowering her one little child into the grave not to be religious, and not to say, “My God, my Father” ; tell her to turn away her tear-filled eyes from the blue heavens, for there is no one there who cares for her agony : fill her ear with atheistic polysyllables, and drag her back from the altar—and see what intellectual conquests you can win. Feeling is sometimes the very inspiration of life. Argument can touch but a very little portion of me. Whatever leaves the *heart* untouched is barren, vexatious, and worse than useless.

Herein is a lesson to the young and strong of a kind that cannot now be very persistently urged. A child, thank God, is all laughter, and I would not punctuate its laugh with a single tear. Let the child laugh. The strong man, who never had a head-ache or heart-ache, who never knew what it was to toss upon the bed hour by hour, calling and crying for sleep,—what can *he* say to anybody? Ask the fat ox the way to heaven, and it will tell you as soon as can such a man say one true word about things that are above the clouds.

Sorrow never came into the world with the will of Christ. Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. Certainly. Then leprosy never came with his will, sympathetically. Whenever you see a grave dug in the cold earth, it is something done against God's will. He never meant this green earth to have its bosom ripped that his children might be thrust into its darkness. We have put the earth to new uses; we have spoiled God's garden, and we have grown his flowers to decorate our dead. No tear ever comes into our eye with God's will. And yet observe that I put in the word *sympathetically*, and did so with a distinct purpose, because leprosy, sorrow, death, are here with God's will *judicially*—they are all his servants. He says in his kind heaven, where the summers are all stored for the earth, "I must not withdraw the leprosy, or they will go mad. I must not kill the fiery flying serpent, or they will swear with a more determined loudness. I must not withdraw the plague, fever, cholera, small-pox, blight upon the wheat fields and olive yards, or they will curse the night through as well as the day. I must keep the constables on the ground, I must thicken my policemen as to their numbers or quicken them as to their vigilance, or that crowd of men upon yonder little black earth will all go to perdition."

So these afflictions, leprosies, and divers diseases are God's constables, God's judicial sentences, God's safeguards, part of God's disciplinary forces. Do you suppose you can drink every night and awake in the morning with a clear head? God puts something into your cup to prevent that. Do you suppose you can plunder and defile and then be as much at rest as if you had sacrificed and prayed? God takes care to put a dart through your liver, to touch you with an argument, and with the only argument you can understand. He does not meet you in the

morning as your mother does, with a remonstrance, he meets you with a dart, he transfixes you with a spear, and says, "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul, spoils the fine membrane, twists the holy aspiration, diminishes the divine capacity, debases the noblest elements of his manhood. You wondered how it was that your hand shook so when you wrote the letter. It was because of the debauch. It is not because you are growing an *old* man, but because you are a *bad* one !

"Jesus put forth his hand and touched him." Who else dare touch the leper ? The touch was death. "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent and his head bared, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, 'Unclean, unclean.' All the days wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall be defiled : he is unclean, he shall dwell alone—without the camp shall be his habitation." In the light of these old words read the text—"He touched him." The sunbeam can touch contaminations without defilement—who can touch pitch and not be defiled ? Blessed Saviour—when did he say "No" to any prayer of the leprous, the blind, the broken-hearted, the bereaved, the penitent ? It was not in him to say "No" to any of these. Many a "No" he gave in reply to Scribe and Pharisee and pompous suppliant who brought his own answer as well as his own prayer : he never said "No" to me when I said "God be merciful to me a sinner." He always gave me a new sheet of paper, and said "Try again : do not blot this one, or you may never have another." I have taken it and blotted it all over and gone back with the old prayer, and got another sheet of paper, pure as the holiness that gave it. These are my reasons for believing in Christ. He is not the Son of God to me because some *grammarian* has forced him to that high eminence ; he is God the Son because he has healed a heart no other physician could touch, and cleansed a sin which would have defiled and polluted every river that ever flowed through the earth. When the soul has these experiences of the Saviour he does not need to have his Deity buttressed by any grammatical patronage.

Mark the wonderful consistency in this Man's procedure. We find him saying in his sermon, "It hath been said by them of old time, but I say unto you." Now in his action we find him repeating the same form. "It hath been said by them of old

time, Thou shalt not touch the leper, but I say unto you, I will touch him." He separates himself from others, yet he is consistent in the reasons of that separation.

"Tell no man." Jesus Christ did not think any miracle worth preaching. We trouble ourselves about the miracles, we ask ourselves hard questions about them, we go to the length of writing expensive books about them. Jesus Christ made nothing of them. "As for the miracle," he said, "do not name it. If you mention it at all, tell it in your own house, and do not let the news get beyond your own circle. I came not to convert the world by miracles; do not encourage the idea that salvation is part of a romantic scheme, one of a set of marvellous phenomena. I have come for other work: not to dazzle the imagination by the performance of miracles, but to charm and save the heart by the proclamation of the kingdom of heaven. See thou tell no man so far as the *miracles* are concerned; so far as the *doctrine* is concerned go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." We have taken hold of this kingdom of heaven by the wrong end. We meet in classes to discuss the miracles,—we poor cold pieces of iron in which there is no fire, have met to consider the constitution of the sun. When will we be wise, and think not of Christ's miracles but of Christ's doctrines? When will we think of what he came to do with regard to the poor *heart*? That is the central business and that is the supreme joy of the Church.

So then the sermon is already being turned to advantage by the people. "Ask, and it shall be given you." Did the leper overhear that? Was it told to the leper by some kind friend? Did he say "I will put this great Speaker to the test—he said 'Ask, and it shall be given,' I will ask him"? He asked and he received. Now the other side must also be consistent. Christ also said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Jesus Christ says to the leper, "You have asked me in effect to prove the words, 'Ask, and it shall be given you'; now I must ask you to prove the words, 'I am not come to destroy the law but to fulfil': so go, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded." A wondrous and self-confirming consistency marks this whole revelation,

and those who have studied it most profoundly and lovingly are most deeply impressed with the perfectness of the literal and moral consistency of God's book.

A wonderful revelation, then, is now before us. This suffering and its removal are to be looked at in the light of two antagonistic wills. "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." There the creature's will becomes right. The moment the will of the creature becomes right, Jesus says "I will : be thou clean." Your will is wrong—trouble not yourselves with little intellectual inquiries and difficulties and enigmas ; it is a waste of time, it is a mortal delusion on your part to suppose that you would be a good man and a holy saint, if some little intellectual cobwebs were taken out of your head. Your *will* is wrong. "Marvel not that I say unto you, Ye must be born again." When your *will* is right, you will find that God's will has always been on your side, on the side of your redeeming and healing and perfecting. He waits to be gracious: he can do nothing with a crooked will, he can do nothing with a perverse will, he can do nothing with a corrupt will, he can do nothing with a selfish will. When we come to him and say, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," thus putting ourselves into his hands simply, lovingly, absolutely, his answer is immediate and complete. It is not therefore your intellect only that must be illumined and rectified : the work must be deeper ; you must be born of water and of the Spirit ; you must be washed in the laver of regeneration : "Marvel not that I say unto you, Ye must be born again."

This redemption is not a question of mere intellectual satisfaction, still less of intellectual excitement or delight : it is a question of the will, the heart, the very source and spring of life. The work is not superficial, but profound : the work is not artificial, but vital : the work is not external, but internal—after being internal it expresses itself in all exterior dignity and loveliness.

PRAAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, our desire is that we may put our trust in thee, then shall our life be safe, and our hope shall be as a light that cannot be blown out. We have trusted ourselves, and to ourselves we have committed perjury; we have made no vow that has not been broken. Behold we stand before thee as criminals, without defence and without covering—we would now say again in thy hearing and in thy strength, "Lord, increase our faith." The just shall live by faith: we walk by faith, not by sight—Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief. Let our unbelief itself be a cry unto thee for other help, let our poverty be a prayer and our want a desire and our helplessness a reason for thy speedy coming to us.

We have come with a hymn of praise, for thy mercy has prevented the rising of the sun, and has lingered with us all through the time of the shining of the stars. In our waking and in our sleeping thy benediction has stretched around our life, our uprising and our downsitting thou hast guarded, thou hast beset us behind and before, and laid thine hand upon us: thy mercies have been a multitude, and thy tender compassions beyond our power to name. We are guilty: thou didst give us a white robe, purer than the snow, we return it to thee to-day unfit to be looked upon by thine eyes. Yet thou art plenteous in forgiveness and thy pardons are a great multitude, yea, more than the waves of the sea, and thou dost cast our sin behind thee and make it as far from us as the east is from the west, and thy delight is to relieve from the burden and the sting of sin. Come to us through Jesus Christ, Son of Mary, Son of Man, Son of God, God the Son, the one Priest, the only Sacrifice, the infinite Mediator, and in coming through him thou wilt come with all thy mercy. Thy righteousness and thy judgment will not thunder against us, but thy gentleness will make us great.

Hear us when we cry for thy presence throughout our whole life. We would not be one day without thee, we would live and move and have our being in God, we would find thy truth and eat it, we would sit down at thy banquet and drive away the hunger of the soul by the riches of thy provision; we would study thy truth with a keen, clear eye, and receive it into an open and honest heart, and repeat it in an obedient and loyal will. Thou hast taught us these great prayers—verily they are not ours, they are the Lord's prayers. Once we loved the darkness and pined for the desert and the rocks, and now we love the light and desire to live in the garden of God. Increase in us the aversion which holiness feels for sin, increase in us all sacred thirst and hunger, that our desire may be after God in great vehemence and expectation, and satisfy us early with thy lovingkindness and plentifully bless us with thy Holy Spirit. We would love the truth, we would see somewhat of its infiniti-

tude, we would see our own littleness and mark duly the boundaries by which we are imprisoned, and then with the eye of our love and hope we would look beyond into the yet unexplored and unknown universe of God. Thus would our religious ambition become sacred as a sacrifice and our desire be as a purpose that cannot be revoked.

We commend one another to thy gentle care. Leave none without a blessing. Let the old man renew his youth, and on this opening summer day recall the spring of his gladder life. Speak to the busy man, lest he should forget eternity in consequence of his devotion to dying time—on the young let the dew of thy blessing and the light of thy sanctification rest all the days of their lives. Heal the broken-hearted, dispossess those who are tormented with devils, curb the unholy passion, and finally destroy it. Hear the prayers that cannot be spoken, that are too sacred for words, that go up to Heaven in pleading, yearning sighs, and answer such according to the tenderness of thine own grace.

Re-ordain every minister of the gospel, consecrate him afresh to his holy work, bind him with sevenfold cords to the one altar that is alone worth serving. Upon all the Churches of the redeemed, by whatsoever names known and disfigured among men, let grace, mercy, and peace constantly abide. Bring in the day when we shall see that all truth ripens into love, and that in so far as we fall short of love we fall short of truth.

The Lord give us the blessing we most need; the light appropriate to the day, the music that will bring all our circumstances into happy consonance with his own purposes. Send messages from the sanctuary to the sick chambers, to the lonely room, to the dark prison, to the troubled sea, to our wanderers in foreign lands, to those further wanderers, who follow the devil's lure. Amen.

Matthew viii. 5-13.

5. And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion (captain of 100 foot-soldiers) beseeching him.

6. And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

7. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. ("He declares himself ready to come to the *Centurion's servant*: he does not promise that he will do so to the *nobleman's son*.")

8. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

9. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

10. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

11. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west (the whole earth), and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

12. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

13. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

THE HUMAN SYMPATHY OF CHRIST.

“**A**ND when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him.” Towns are differently excited by different visitors. If Beethoven were to come to London, all the music of the metropolis would vibrate with delight and expectation and hope. If some great athlete were to visit the metropolis, all persons interested in athletics would be instantly filled with a desire to see the performance. When Jesus Christ went into a town all the sick people, all the broken-hearted, the helpless, and the weary felt a thrill of expectation and hope, and they were almost bettered by the very news that he was coming. Think of a man entering a town whose very presence sends a gospel to the broken-hearted—that is the man I want to see. I could listen to the musician for a while, I could applaud the acrobat for a moment or two, I would withhold the palm from no man who had won it, but when I had passed through the whole rank and file of those who had entertained, instructed, and amused me, I should want every day to have with me the man that could touch my afflictions, and bear my diseases, and heal my wounded heart. I would say to him, “Abide with me, the day is far spent, but it cannot die while the light of thine eye is in the house; abide with me.”

This is how Jesus Christ endears himself so much to my heart, and how it is that my love for him is a love passing the love of women, and how it is that I cannot be torn away from his side. It is not that I am puzzled by his genius, thrilled by his mighty miracles, astounded by much that is wondrous in himself and his works; but because he himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses, and goes up into the sick-chamber though a leper be in it, and though a pestilence too foul for my mother to face be filling the chamber with its fatal contagion. This is the Christ to whom I call you. Know him by the depth and tenderness and incessancy of his sympathy and love, and fall down before him, not because forced to your knees by some grammatical and exegetical pressure, but because constrained to that worshipful

act by an infinite understanding of your own *heart*, and an ineffable and redeeming sympathy with every emotion and passion of your life.

"There came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy grievously tormented." A servant at home—what an extraordinary and antiquated conjunction of terms, "There came a centurion, saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented." That is not a prayer—there is no request in that form of words, it is a mere piece of intelligence. See the character of the man in the form of his approach. Is there no prayer in the *eye*, is there no agony in the *look*, is there no supplication in the *tone*? What can the printers do but catch the bare words and put them into cold black ink? This is how it is that the written page is not the spoken discourse; it lacks the fire that glowed in the face, the inquiry that sharpened the vision of the eye, the music and the eloquence that made the tone pierce the hearer's heart like a prayer. Why you, man of few words, gifted with rare silence, often complaining that you have no language, could pray like this! Prayer is the lifting of an eye, prayer is the falling of a tear, prayer is the outdarting of an arm as if it would snatch a blessing from on high. You do not need long sentences, intricate expressions, elaborate and innumerable phrases; a *look* may be a battle half won. "According to thy faith, so be it unto thee." You may pray now, or in the crowded street, or in the busiest scene—you can always have a word with God—you can always wing a whisper to the skies. Pray without ceasing. Live in the spirit of prayer, let your life be one grand desire, Godward and heavenward, then use as many words or as few as you please, your heart is itself a prayer, and your look a holy expectation.

Beautiful is it to see the Pagan come into Christian worship. He does not know what to do. A trained soldier and a man in authority, he wishes to be respectful and yet he does not know what is proper to the new situation. He therefore beseechingly states the case. It is beautiful to see one unaccustomed to the form of worship in any place, enter into the strange sanctuary and look inquiringly round to see what has to be done next. There is no wish to come into collision with the established

usages of the place. There is, indeed, a lingering liking for the way at home, but a willing disposition to accept new forms and methods. There is something pathetic in such ignorance, and something instructive in such inquiry. But see the centurion, a man, a stranger, a Pagan, one far off, coming to state his servant's case, and to leave it with a beseeching look and a beseeching tone—why that is to receive education in an uncertificated school, it is to receive a hint from lips uncircumcised—that is to learn from those who themselves are ignorant of the subtle and peculiar methods adopted under new circumstances.

Jesus will be puzzled by this new form of approach. Having heard about the servant at home sick of the palsy he will say, "Well, what then?" He will teach this man how to pray, he will say, "If you want any favour from me you must approach me in certain form or I cannot hear you." He understood the heart—he meets the suppliant half way. Do you suppose that your ladder-prayer can reach the stars? It only touches God because God comes down to let it touch him. Heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, yet he comes down to the habitations of men and listens for their prayers as if those prayers filled the universe.

How does Jesus Christ adapt himself to this man's approach? He meets the man in his own spirit. Without hearing the request he says, "I will come and heal him." That verse makes me a believer in the deity of Christ: I need no other proof. If he said *that*, he is God enough for me. Not "I will come and inquire into the case, I will come and see whether anything can be done to mitigate this awful mischief: I can sympathize with you, if I can go no further," but with the calmness of the fiat that arched the heavens and lit its lamps, he says, "I will come and heal him." The people were astonished at his doctrine, because he taught them as one having authority. They are astounded at his word, for he speaks of disease as one having infinite power. Last Sunday we saw him touching a leper, and heard him saying, "Be thou clean;" to-day our lesson brings before us a man sick of the palsy, grievously tormented, and Jesus Christ says, "I will come and heal him." Then he was no *specialist*. Properly we have amongst ourselves now special studies of special cases. One

man undertakes the brain, another the heart, another the blood, it may be, another the bones and joints. This is right, amongst ourselves ; for probably hardly any one man has the time, even if he had the capacity, to master with sufficient adequateness all the details and necessities of our wondrous bodily frame. But Jesus Christ said to the leper, "Be thou clean," to the man sick of the palsy, grievously tormented, "I will come and heal him." When he went into Peter's house and saw his wife's mother laid and sick of the fever, he touched her hand and the fever left her, he put out the fire with his touch. He is no specialist, he has not a necromancer's power over any *one* department of human life or human suffering. His healing was fundamental and all-inclusive. He made the well-head pure, and the flowing stream was as pure as the fountain whence it flowed.

It is so in spiritual matters. There is not in the Church a doctor who cures lying, and another who makes a special study of drunkenness, and a third who is gifted with peculiar ability in dealing with persons of felonious disposition. There is one Mediator between God and man : he makes the *heart* right, and then all the accidental and local diseases, with all their train of ever-varying symptoms, are cleansed and utterly expelled. Thus in the Church of Christ we have no special means for special cases, as *contra-distinguished* from the general means at our disposal for the universal disease and apostasy. There is one word for all, one healing for all. When you talk of your follies and peculiar sins and characteristic slips and individual passions, these are but symptoms of a grand moral ailment : the whole head is sick, the whole heart faint, and the remedy must be vital and fundamental, not a successful playing with accidental symptoms, but an appeal to the heart, a cleansing of the inner nature. "Ye must be born again."

Whatever your complaint is, of mind, body, or estate, you may take it to Jesus Christ. If you are not doing well in business, go and tell him about it : if you are afflicted in any bodily way, go and state the case to him and leave it in his hands ; if you be possessed with devils and grievously tormented in your heart, go and state the case to the Son of God. Go and tell Jesus *everything*. Do not tell him what answer to give in return. I like every day to have a long talk with him in the streets, or in the house, or

anywhere, just telling him what I did yesterday, and what a fool I was for doing it, and asking him to keep me this day without sin, and putting my whole broken life into his care, that he may teach me that the part is not the whole, and that there are purposes in his will and providence which I can neither comprehend nor control. He always heals me with rest and with added faith. The thorn remains, the cruel sting goes deeper, the fire licks up further blood, and yet there is an *inner* healing, a sacred rest, and loving trust in God.

The centurion having heard the reply of Jesus Christ, said, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." He was a man under authority, and his word was law; then why did he not command his servant to be healed? It is thus we always come to our limit, it is thus that the sceptre we lift touches the end of its dominion, and shrinks back into a common walking staff. Said the centurion, "I have authority." Then why did he not use it in new directions? Within our own lines we are mighty; beyond those lines we are captured as trespassers or slain as mean spies. When men learn to keep within their own proper boundaries, intellectual and other, they will attain the fulness and the most satisfactory fruition of their power, but the meanest of us can ask questions that may vex and trouble the heart of God. Happy he who knows the length of his sceptre, and who lays it down at the right point, who says, "I am a man under authority, but there is a point at which my word has no force: I am silent at that point, and I begin to pray where I cease to rule." That is the true law of life.

Yet what wisdom the man had! He said, "But speak the word only." He little knew what he was saying. "The word"—that would have been beautiful and complete—"the word *only*," there he falls into softness and weakness; he shows the stoop which proves him to be but a man. "The word *only*." The word is the authority, the word is the power, the word is the soul, the word is the incarnation. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Your word is *yourself*: do not imagine that your speech is something

independent of your individuality; your speech is your soul in utterance. When a man speaks earnestly, the word is the very fire and flame of his heart. Jesus Christ could not but speak earnestly, so his quietest word held the thunder, the lightning, as the dewdrop holds it, for there is force enough in that one dewdrop, if rightly touched, to rend the mountain and throw down the altar stair that faced heavenward. Let your yea be yea, and your nay nay—let your word be your true self, and it will always be, according to the degree of your capacity and influence, with authority and power.

Now it is Jesus Christ's turn: O that we could have seen that marred and sorrow-riven face when he lifted it up and marvelled. He himself had seen a miracle: his own miracles, viewed as mere expressions of power, fell into insignificance before the miracle performed by the centurion, the miracle of all-trust, living, loving, simple, unquestioning, undisputing trust. "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." A great wave of emotion swelled his heart; forecasting the ages, he saw the crown already rounding into shape that was to sit upon his own head, and though the cross lay between him and that crown, he endured the cross and despised the shame.

We have it in our power to gladden his heart. How pleased he always was with faith. If a man looked trustfully at him, he said he was a son of Abraham. Sinner, others called him, and publican; Jesus called him Son of Abraham. How pleased he was, let me say again and again, with faith; a woman touched the hem of his garment and he called her daughter. He had never seen the woman before, humanly, yet he called her by endearing names and sent her home with his peace. Her house was never so rich as it was in that sunset. He does not ask our intellect, our pomp, our power, our grandeur; what can these be to him, who thickly inlaid the floor of Heaven with "patines of bright gold"? What can our gilt be to him who spoke the sun into being, and rolled the stars along? But when we look up to him and say, "Lord, I believe," it fills his very soul with joy. He keeps back nothing from *faith*, he says if we had faith as a grain of mustard seed, the mountains would be at our bidding and the earth would be our slave.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we are all sick : do thou heal our sicknesses and take our infirmities, and make us well with the health of heaven. We are sick in body, or we are sick in heart : the whole life is crooked and in pain, our very breathing is a cry of distress, and every pulse of our heart is a confession of weakness. Behold our life is a poverty, and our existence is a sigh. The whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint, and there is in us no health. We come to the great Healer, to the Physician that is in Gilead, and to the balm that is there. Others have healed our hurt slightly : they have said, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace—now do we come to God our Father, that we may be healed in our heart and made clean in our whole being. Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make us clean. Yet why should we challenge thee thus when thy whole ministry is a welcome to thy love and an utterance of thine infinite gospel? Thou dost shut the door on none, thou hast said "Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." The grace is upon thy side more than the pleading is upon ours. Thine answer is greater than our prayer ; the healing of God is greater than the distress of man. Thou dost pardon with pardons ; thy forgiveness is as the waves of the sea, not to be numbered ; great and mighty are they, and they come with all the force of thy tender heart. We confess our sins before thee with an open mouth, and with a heart that has no reservation ; we cry, "Unclean, unclean, unprofitable, unprofitable, lepers are we all, and cankered in the very heart—God be merciful unto us sinners." The blood of Jesus Christ thy Son cleanseth from all sin ; we would now feel its gracious power and answer its cleansing ministry. It is at the cross we find the laver of regeneration, it is on Calvary we are forgiven ; the pardons of thine heart are signed with the blood of Christ.

Thou hast given unto us a few days, and we spend them as the fool spends his small heritage. We know not when our breath may be taken from us, yet behold we tell lies and do many deceitful things, and work before God as if we could claim the residue of our time. Show us that our breath is in our nostrils, that our grave is already dug, and that we are hastening with every breath we draw to the great judgment ; and whilst this reflection makes us solemn, may all thy promises be as singing angels in our hearts, making them glad with the encouragements which come of thy grace and approbation. Help us to work with both hands diligently ; may there be no half-heartedness in our industry ; may our life be the toil of a slave, because having in it the love which constrains the heart, and we shall call no time or power our own. We would be the slaves of the Lord Jesus ; we would be bound to him by every energy and every passion ; would call nothing our own ; to him would we give ourselves

and all we have. Let this be a time of consecration, individual and universal ; may every heart call nothing it has its own, but give itself and its possessions to the great Saviour of the race.

Upon the old and the young let thy sunlight fall ; upon the venerable trees that have grown many years, and upon the little flowers that gleam at their roots, a few days old, and soon to be cut down and withered. The Lord look upon us in all the relations of our life ; let our houses be homes, let our homes be Churches, and let the Church at home be the sweetest place on earth.

Give guidance to those who are in perplexity ; put the right key into the hand of the man who is opening the gate that bars his honourable way ; speak comfortably unto Jerusalem, and say with thine own voice that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned. Upon all Churches, upon all Christian institutions, upon all schools and universities, upon all men who are in any wise endeavouring to do good, let the blessing of God be poured out to-day in an impartial and refreshing rain. Amen.

Matthew viii. 14-17.

14. And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.

15. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her : and she arose, and ministered unto them.

16. When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils : and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick :

17. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.

WORKING ALL DAY.

“AND when Jesus was come into Peter's house.” The centurion would not hear of the Lord Jesus Christ going to his house : it was beneath so great a worker and teacher : it was a humiliation not to be permitted by the sense which the centurion had of Roman dignity and Roman majesty. Said he, “Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.” Jesus Christ appeared to the centurion to be in his right place when he was upon the mountain, when he was upon the sea, when the great blue sky was the only roof over his head. It did not enter into his mind that Jesus Christ could enter a little human habitation. Do not let us make the Lord Jesus Christ too *dignified* in our social and conventional sense : there is more in Christ than what we should limit by the word *dignity*. I am afraid that some of us keep a long way from God, because his dignity, as we falsely and vainly interpret it, keeps us at a cold distance. We must get

to an appreciation of his mind by such words as love, grace, sympathy, condescension, pity. It is in that region that our imagination and our love must move if they would realise all the higher blessings and all the tenderer benedictions which are associated with the Divine name.

“When Jesus was come into the house.” We have been with him at the *river*—there he was baptized; we have been with him in the *wilderness*—there he was tempted: we have been with him as he walked by the *seaside*—there he called disciples to become fishers of men: we have been with him on the *mountain*—there in soft and musical thunder he addressed the ages. He came into Capernaum, the *city*; he is getting nearer. To-day he enters the *house*, and thus completes his relation to all points of human life and human need. He would come into your house if you would let him; he would come nearer still, he would come into your heart if you were willing. “Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and will open the door I will come in.” He cannot force his way into your heart-house—he could take the slates off your roof, pour down his rain upon your little fire until it was quenched, but he cannot force a child’s love; the feeblest life can mock him with bitter taunting and keep him outside. Know thy power: it is a mischievous strength, but know, O man, that it lies within thy power to smite God in the face and to mock him with every throb of thine heart. Know thy power, realise thy strange weird majesty—that thou art almost God!

When he was come into the house, he found a shadow there.

There is a shadow in every house, there is a fever in every family.

“There is no flock, however watched or tended,
But one dead lamb is there;
There is no fireside, howsoe’er defended,
But has one vacant chair.”

If we could find a house in which there was no fever, no death, no pain, no sorrow, no poverty, we should all want to live in it.

But Peter was a *disciple*, he was an incipient apostle, he was the senior disciple; great honours were in store for his name in the ages, and yet the shadow was in *his* house. You would think that God would send all the shadows upon the atheist, and would

pile night on him so thickly as to make him mad with darkness. Yet it is not so in the Divine government. Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is there whom the father chasteneth not? If ye be without chastening then are ye bastards and not sons. Doubt your sonship if the chastening be little and infrequent.

Who would not have spared the senior disciple—who would not have made him the focal point on which should have converged all the rays of the Divine approbation, so that he might have been like a light seen afar, blazing forth the excellence and the wondrousness of the Divine election. The thief that lived next door had less fever in his house than Peter had. Sometimes the bad man's ground brings forth plentifully, sometimes the pampered and overfed Dives has wealth upon wealth, while the praying soul is outside with dogs for his companions and crumbs as his portion. All this cannot be reconciled within the narrow limits of time. We want more field: the line that appears to be straight is only apparently straight, because of the limited points within which it is drawn. Extend the line and it partakes of the shape of the world upon whose surface it is drawn. So within these narrow points of time, the rocking cradle and the deep tomb, there is not scope enough to reconcile all the divine purposes and actions and mysteries; we need more field, an ampler horizon. We shall get it by-and-by, and then we shall know how God has been dealing with us in forcing rivers out of our eyes and in making our heads a burning pain. O child of God, much praying man, wearied almost with crying at heaven's gate, proceed, persevere, the sigh of thy weakness shall be mightier far than the thunder of thy strength. Do not despair, do not yet give up; while there is one dying ray of light in the sky, hold on.

Who would be without affliction at home, at least sometimes? Affliction unites the family. Given great prosperity and great wealth, and you may possibly find along with these great vanity and great tendency to self-assertion and to mutual contradiction and contention: but given affliction, and there is something in it that touches every heart and constrains every energy, and focalises all the resources of the house, so that the sick-chamber is often the *church* of the habitation. It would be a fool's hiding-place

but for the sick-chamber ; that sick-chamber makes the young pause, the impetuous take time, the thoughtless set down his foot quietly lest he should give needless shock and pain in the quiet place of suffering. It sets wits to work—not the intellectual wits only, but the heart's wits—to find out new delicacies, new tones, new music, new expressions of gentleness. It makes women of us all.

You would not be half the man you are but for your sick child ; your tendency is towards bumptiousness, aggressiveness of speech, sternness, harshness. You have a magisterial cast and bearing in your life ; but that little sick child has softened you, and been like a benediction upon your life. Men now take notice of your voice and say, "What new tones have subtly entered into it ; how different the kind grasp, how noble the new bearing, how impressive the sacred patience, how touching and pathetic the sadness of the face !" Afflictions do not spring out of the dust : do not be impatient with them ; we need something to soften this hard life. O, if it were all buying, selling, getting gain, outrunning one another in a race for wealth in which the racers take no time to recover themselves—there would be no gardens on the face of the earth, no places consecrated to floral beauty, no houses built for music, no churches set up for prayer. But affliction helps to keep us right, affliction brings us to our knees. Poverty says, "*Think, fool, think.*" Affliction opens the Bible at the right places. If you, strong man, with the radiant face and the full pocket, were to open the Bible, it would open upside down, and at nothing. But you, broken-hearted mother, you, child of sickness, you orphan and lonely one, your Bible falls open always at the right place. Give me your family Bible, and I will tell you your history. The Bible of the strong, prosperous, rich man—'tis like himself ; well kept—too well. Hand me yours, man of the broken heart and the tear-stained cheek, and the reddened eye and the furrowed brow. Ah, all marks and thumbings, and turnings down and marginal notes and pencil indications—twenty-third Psalm, fortieth of Isaiah, a hundred places in Jeremiah—including the Lamentations—why, I need no concordance to this Bible, if I want to seek out the promises. I see your guest has been Sorrow, and the hospitality you have offered him has been Patience. If you would know the value of the Bible in

the house, consult those who have needed it most, and abide by their sweet reply.

"When the even was come." What even? The astronomical even. It brings its own beauty with it. Do not be sorry when the sun westers and glows with solemn pomp in his dying hour. When the even was come *astronomically*, the sun rose redeemingly. Jesus came with the sunset, and when he comes the sun rises. It was a wondrous conjunction, the old, old sun of the heavens, faithful servant of God, lamp too high to be blown out by man's breath—when the sun had done all he could for the earth, he was going away, and then arose the other Sun, the Sun of Righteousness, with healing under his wings. See what a busy sunset was this. They brought unto him many that were possessed with devils, and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick. Mark, this work of Jesus Christ was twofold: it had to do with devils that held the dominion of the mind, and it had to do with diseases that held the dominion of the body. What wondrous ease is in these words—"He cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick," and it is written as if he had merely looked up or breathed, so consummate, so infinite, so deific the ease. It is always so that God must work; he can do nothing by an effort; if it were an effort it would not be divine. Power is in the *ease*: the ease is the signature of deity.

In all great life the same thing is exemplified. The painter does not paint with difficulty, if he be heaven-born; he paints because he *breathes*. The poet does not struggle with a long and painful agony to write his verses: he writes because he breathes. All this, of course, has its limitations in human life; it reaches the fulness and the last touch of its infinite sacredness in Christ, who spake and it was done, who commanded and it stood fast—because he planted the heavens and set the earth upon nothing.

Observe, not only was the word twofold, but it was complete—it was finished. How is it with us in regard to our human helpings and healings? We speak thus, and not inaccurately or unwisely, namely, "The doctor did me much good; the physician did me some good; the medical advice was in some degree just **what I wanted**; the relief was palpable, and I was glad of it."

Do you ever find that word recorded of Christ? Did he ever *almost* heal a man? It is a curious thing of those unlearned and ignorant men who wrote his life, to have set down this, so consistently, as if they had been working upon a plan of mutual and collusive deceit and fraud. Did he ever come into contact with a devil-ridden one and say, "I can almost heal thee, but not wholly"? His disciples have come into conflict with such a possessed individual, but Jesus was not there. He came down and found the crowd around the disciples and said, "What is it?" It ennobles us to see him in that hour; his face has a transfiguring effect upon our commonness. "What is it?" and a voice said, "I brought my child to thy disciples that they might cast out the devil that has seized and ruined him, and they could not." Did his face darken with fear? Did his person contract with shame? Did he postpone the controversy? He said, "Bring him unto me," and he said, "I command thee come out of him," and he came out like a scourged hound that knew the master's voice, a voice that fell upon him like a thong of scorpions, and he came out.

Did Jesus Christ ever almost heal the halt? did he ever open the eyes of the blind almost? did he ever give a *little* relief to the deaf? He said, "Go, tell John the things ye see and hear; the blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the lame walk, and unto the poor the gospel is preached."

Yet he who can work omnipotently in all these directions which are indicated by demon possession and direful disease, cannot work faster in your heart than you will *let* him. It is there that he must work partially, and incompletely. He would make us without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but we will not *let* him. We know our power and we use it. He can drive out the devil—but how to bring the angel in? He can banish our disease and restore our bodily health—but how to make the soul well? "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." It hath pleased him to make us so, that we can keep him knocking. There is no force in the *moral* direction: God works by consent of the human heart. "Behold I stand at the door and knock." No other god dare take upon him such humility. We keep our mythological gods in courtly pomp, we keep them well up in the smoke and the cloud. It takes *truth* to search in the mud, to light a candle

and seek for the lost man ; it takes *God* to die that man may live. Let us give our hearts to him.

Jesus Christ's work was *continual*. We have been impressed with this as we have come along the story. It presents him with opportunities, and he accepts them as they come. The multitudes were gathered—he opened his mouth and taught them. There came a leper—he said, "I will, be thou clean." He entered into Capernaum, and there came unto him a centurion, and he healed the centurion's servant. He came into Peter's house and found a fever-stricken woman—he touched her hand and the fever fled from that touch. When the even was come, they brought unto him devils, and he healed all that were sick. Jesus Christ's ministry was a great effort ; it was a great life. O thou preaching man, do not spend thy time in preparing thy *sermon*, but in preparing *thyself*, and the sermon will be right, not perhaps artistically and technically, and according to the wooden standards of the self-made schools, but there will be in it subtle flame, subtle sympathy, magnetism, divine flashings and gleamings that will help men to the mountains. The Saviour never gathered himself together for a great occasion—he *was* the great occasion. He created the opportunity, he ennobled the chance of the day, he found a wilderness and built a tabernacle in it ; he found a needy humanity, and he left the blessing of heaven where he found the trace and signature of the devil.

Apply all this to ourselves. Jesus, go home with us and see what a shadow is there ; go upstairs with us and see the daughter who has not been well these twenty years, and the son whose life is an almost daily weakness, and often a sharp and crying pain. Come into the shop, the counting-house, the bank, and see how we have huddled things together, and straighten out these crooked things for us. Come into our hearts, and see how we have devils in them, devils of ambition, devils of falsehood, devils of vanity, all kinds of devils, and cleanse the defiled heart. We are all sick ; there is not a life that has not its pain, not a hope that has not its shadow, not a prayer that has not its fierce temptation. O thou Healer, thou Father and Mother of us all, dear Jesus, a Woman thou art, a Man, a God, Son of Mary, Son of Man—enter every heart and make it beautiful as heaven !

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we come to thee in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Priest, our only answer to thy law. We live in thy remembrance of us : when thou dost forget us, we shall die in the darkness of thy frown. Who can stand the neglect of God? Thou openest thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. That thou givest them, they gather ; thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good ; thou turnest away thine eyes and they die in the infinite darkness. Who can stand against the Lord, or fight against his almightiness and prevail? Thy chariots are as the whirlwind and thy horses are swifter than eagles, and our hand is lifted up in weakness only to fall down again in utter failure and distress. Truly we live because thy compassions fail not : thy pity is the explanation of the continuance of our days ; because thine heart is moved towards us with all the tenderness of yearning love, therefore is our life not yet cut off—we are the living, the living to praise thee, we stand as memorials of thy goodness ; our very breathing should be a song of thy care and love, yea our whole life should be a sacrifice unto thee because of thy patience and long-suffering.

Thou hast written thy book for our guidance : thou hast not left us without witness and memorial in the wilderness ; thou hast declared thy counsel concerning us in many simple and tender words. Give us the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the understanding heart, and may thy will, revealed in plain letters, be the man of our counsel and the guide of our life. May we have no will of our own, may we live in thy purpose and bow loyally before thy Kingship. All we like sheep had gone astray ; we had turned every one to his own way. Now by the grace of God manifested in Jesus Christ, we have returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. We enter into thine house with thanksgiving, with loud sweet songs of the very heart, fired with all our love, and lifted high above the winds because of the passion of our thankfulness. Hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling-place, our adoring psalm and our filial hymn, and send down from the invisible sanctuary blessings that shall illuminate and nourish and perfect our souls.

Thou knowest us altogether ; we have nothing that we can hide from God. Thou knowest the place of our roots, and every fibre of them is under thy searching eye. Thou knowest where we were born and under what circumstances of joy or sorrow. Thou hast looked upon us ever since. Thy good hand has beset us behind and before, and has been laid upon us, and because of thy blessing our life is now found in a holy place. Thou knowest the rods that have smitten us ; thou knowest the thorns that have pierced and torn us in our long journeyings ; thou knowest what difficult places have been found in our course, how sometimes there have been no friends and many enemies, much sand and stone, and no water. Thou understandest us altogether, in our

sorrows and in our delights, in our adversities and prosperities, and thou dost judge us by thy pity and love as well as by the severity of thy righteousness. According to our want and pain do thou now come to us every one : omit none from thy blessing. Where the heart is burdened do thou lift the oppressed weight ; where the eyes are darkened with a great darkness do thou let fall upon them some gentle light from Heaven ; where there is great gladness or unusual joy of heart, where the goblet is full of the wine of joy, do thou grant unto such to remember that all true and perfect gifts come down from Heaven, from the Father of lights.

Speak to those who are nearly done ; show them that they have but a few pages to write and the life-letter will be complete. Speak comfortably to those who are in the midst of their records, and do thou show them that what is now being written will one day be read by thyself. Come near to those who are beginning their way, and give them courage, Christian hopefulness, saintly resolution, and enable them to work out their life's work with all patience and love and Christian fidelity. The Lord look upon those who are not with us to-day, who are in the sick-chamber, or in some place of penitential hiding, or on the great sea, or in the far-off land, in the prison, or in the field of war. The Lord look upon all whom we ought to include in our tenderest prayers, and send blessings from the sanctuary that shall be as the bread of life.

We put ourselves day by day into thine hands ; send what thou wilt send to us ; let the light fall upon us from every point of the sky if thou wilt, or let the great darkness make our way fearful. Whether it be light or whether it be dark, take not thy Holy Spirit from us ; let there be light within, and then there shall be the calm of Heaven.

The Lord help every good man to do his work with both hands, diligently, with a heart steadfast in all righteousness, and with an expectation that cannot be cut off in despair. The Lord turn upside down the counsel of the wicked, and bring to naught the deliberations of those whose heart is moved by malice. The Lord forgive our enemies, pity our littlenesses ; come with infinite pardonings to our heavy and ever-darkening guilt, and ever lift above the cloud of our fear the cross of the great Son of God. Amen.

Matthew viii. 18-22.

18. Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

19. And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

20. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests (literally *shelter*), but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

21. And another of his apostles said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

22. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me ; and let the dead bury their dead.


THE CONDITIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP.

“ **H**E gave commandment.” There was always in him some sign of lordship. He did not *receive* instructions, he gave them ; though in one moment more his mouth was to be

opened in a confession of the fact that he had not where to lay his head, yet he gave commandment. This kind of writing does not come of the uninspired human fancy, nor hold together with sufficient artistic cohesion, to be the child of the mere imagination. Yet there is a rugged and vital unity about it, which is the seal of truth. A peasant and the son of a peasant and without any signs of power about him such as are reckoned of consequence by earthly judges, he yet "gave commandment." Whence this imperative tone? Whence this subtle claim to dominion? Whence this quiet assumption of supreme power? When he concluded his discourse the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority, not as one *being* in authority, not as one who had on an official cloak and must be respected for his clothes' sake, but as one *having* authority, breathing it, holding it, originating it, directing it; and this same authoritative speaker of doctrine, gave commandment, issued a royal precept, told the people about him what to do. Truly the parts do hold together, not with any mechanical contrivance, but because they belong to one another by the law of a reconciliation which does not come within the technical sphere of the mere fancy. His look was law; his tone admitted of no qualifications; his word was prompt, complete, authoritative, final. He never recalled a sentence to amend it; he never requested permission to add to his own doctrine an explanatory or emendatory note. Show me a single instance in which he ever corrected himself. Our pages are blotted all over with erasures and disfigured by a thousand interlineations, but his writing is straight on, no sentence interfering with any other sentence, any more than any star clashes with any fellow planet in all the sea of the heaven.

"When he saw great multitudes about him he gave commandment to depart." We should have thought it would have been an excellent reason for staying where he was. What more could he need than great multitudes? He came to teach, to preach, to heal, to bless, and to save, and behold here are great multitudes, and yet he gives their presence as a reason for leaving them. Why did this Son of man leave the great thronging, sweltering multitudes? Because the true spirit had left them. They were a mob: it was a great *congeries* of curious gazers, of persons who wanted to be satisfied with mighty works and wondrous signs.

They were swollen with their own wonder, moved by the bad inspiration of their own love of amazement. To such people Jesus Christ never has anything to say. To the miracle-loving Herods he answers never a word; to the merely curious inquirers regarding doctrine or history he preserves a stony silence. It is not the crowd as a crowd he wants or seeks, it is the needy heart, the conscious poverty, the piercing, pleading pain. Do not suppose that we can attract him by anything of a merely multitudinous or formal or ceremonial character. To this man will I look—*which* man? The crowned one, whose shoulders are em-purpled, whose feet are plunged in soft velvet and down? To this man will I look. I long for the answer to that statement. "Which man?" my heart inly cries. To the man that is of a *broken and a contrite heart and who trembleth at my word*. Fill your churches with multitudes and with eloquence and with incense and with colour, till the eye is weighted by its oppressiveness, but if the waiting, panting, broken heart be not there, Christ is miles away, yea, on the other side of the horizon, with his back to us. The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was *lost*. He comes to our poverty, weakness, and self-renunciation, not to our wealth and strength and self-assertion.

 We have now to figure him as about to move to the other side, and whilst he is in the process of going, a certain scribe came and said unto him, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." This man represents the ardent and hopeful side of human nature. He sees no difficulties, his heart is swollen with a new and glad impulse, and he says he will follow that impulse, whatever the event may be. Could consecration be completer? Could any promise be less reserved? The Son of man will leap towards this man as towards a friend: he will fall upon his neck and cry tears of joy upon his shoulders. What was his reply? Cold as ice. The hot heart came to him, and he dropped into it a great load of polar ice. The reply in letters was this: "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." What became of the scribe? The text does not inform us.

Jesus Christ treated the ardent temperament by always presenting the dark side of the case. It is thus he balances us. To the low in heart, the fearful and timorous in spirit, he speaks

a promise, and so lifts up the mind on the depressed side until a happy equipoise is established. To the bold, enthusiastic, romantic disciple, who is going to walk upon the wind, he says, "You are going to a land where you will not have a pillow for your head." It is thus that men see different sides of the Christian faith: it is thus that men are measured by different standards in the Christian sanctuary. It is thus that perhaps no two Christian experiences exactly coincide. Christ is to us what we are to him. He fills the great mountain with light, and he fills the little daisy, too, with light, and never a beam too much to bear down its weak little neck. He that gathers much in this field has nothing over; he who gathers little has no lack. How foolish, then, and utterly vain is any attempt to reconcile men's thinkings in mere letters and words. You cannot write Christian experience once for all. It varies, it carries a thousand different colours and tints and hues and mixtures of colour, and utters itself in innumerable tones, complete, strong, tender, weak, whining, valiant, glad as the utterance of a trumpet, and sad as the moaning of a heart that is stabbed. Do not, therefore, be looking out for uniform standards and unanimous opinions and coincident experiences. Christianity will answer you so as to bring up the side of your character that needs elevation.

This is beautifully illustrated in the case of the next man. Another of the disciples said unto him, "Lord, I will go with thee to the other side, but suffer me first to go and bury my father." How filial, how tender—a plea to which the Son of God can have but one reply. What says he? He speaks in a most soldierly tone. He hardens himself into most inexorable discipline, and says, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead." A hard tone, without one pulse of human feeling in it: how unloving, how unsympathetic, how chilling, how calculated to alienate human affection! This answer was to a particular person of a particular temperament, and was meant to redeem that man from a false conception of Christian doctrine and Christian duty. It does not apply to all cases; it had a distinct and limited application, and was the only message fitted for the kind of man to whom it was delivered. He could not hand on the message indiscriminately to others; it was a gospel spoken to his own heart; it was bread intended for the satisfaction of his own hunger.

This man, however, has many representatives in all ages. Let us understand him a little. He is the kind of man who always has some *arrangement* to make. He is the sort of person who can never do the next thing that is to be done without precedingly doing something on one side. There are persons who, when we call them, say, "Coming—*presently*." A broken obedience, a reluctant reply, a mixed answer! Who can tell how far that "presently" stretches over their life? "Presently" is a word that cannot be described by the dictionary, and that cannot be measured on the face of the clock. Are you not acquainted with some friends who are always quite willing to serve you, but first must go down the road or up the hill, to the post-office, or up-stairs, and then . . . ? Such arrangements may be permitted as between man and man, such little slaveries to the matter of convenience may be permitted on the social scale, but when it becomes a question of following *Christ*, we are called upon for absolute self-surrender. That is the very essence of Christianity. There is nothing double in Christian consecration; the true Christian slave has one eye, one hand, one end, one heart, one prayer, one desire. Have we attained this? Not a soul amongst us has come within a million miles of its attainment; but if we *desire* it, hope for it, and struggle towards it, God will take a broken column as if it were a pillar completed to a glittering point.

The answer of Jesus Christ to all temporising and arrangement-making persons is an answer of unreserved and absolute surrender. Do you suppose that we have given Christ everything? I have not. If you have, I have nothing to say to you. I am still burying my father, I am still completing my bargains, I am still adding to my estate, I am still studying the ways and tricks of a perverse world, I am still hushing my breath, so as not to awaken the sleeper. I am going after Christ, but I must first quaff this cup, inhale this fragrance, and breathe in this cloud. I am coming—*presently*. This is what you said to me when I asked you to join the Church, to surrender to Christ, to become an out-and-out Christian. You did not say to me, "No!" you said, "Thank you, I will come—*presently*."

These answers of Jesus Christ are exaggerations in the sense of having *another side* to them which would have shown their true meaning. There are some persons who do not understand the

law of exaggeration: to them an exaggeration is a lie; they do not know that we have to paint very broadly, to be seen afar. There are those who do not understand that we have to infuse into some utterances an emphasis beyond the immediate literal requirement of the case in order that the detonation may be heard. They do not comprehend Jesus Christ when he utters those sublime exaggerations, yet nothing but such exaggerations would have met the cases in question. Now let us qualify them.

Peter once said to Jesus, "We have left all and followed thee." Jesus Christ replied, "No man hath left father or mother, sister or brother, houses or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but shall receive a hundredfold in this present life and in the world to come life everlasting." That was not the answer which he made to the scribe: to him he set forth the *severe*—by-and-by he would enter into the *gracious*. His gospel does not *tempt* us; the kingdom of heaven is not a bribe, it is first a cross, a discipline, a pain, an agony, and afterwards a sweet quiet heaven. In the case of Peter the great act had been *done*, in the case of the scribe it was *about* to be done. The scribe would have been misled if the great promise had been held out to him; he therefore had revealed to him only the darker aspect of this great adventure.

Jesus Christ never lets any man really go after him and be disappointed with the result. He keeps his grace for daily revelation according to the daily need. He giveth more grace—he giveth grace upon grace. He will not tempt you as with a bribe, but he will feed you with an eternal satisfaction. I do not ask you therefore to come into the Christian sanctuary that you may get rid of your distresses, and your debts and burdens, your pains of body and your clouds of mind, but I call you and tell you that it is a cross you have to take up. That was the message of Jesus Christ to another of his disciples—"Follow me, quench every other love, fix your undivided vision upon myself, beware of wandering desires and divided affections and broken resolutions and imperfect vows. If any man will follow me, let him take up his cross." A great teacher, truly, and not less gracious than severe.

From these two instances two false inferences might be drawn.

First, that *Jesus Christ did not care to make disciples*. He had the chance of making two disciples here in the superior sense (for probably they were both disciples in the merely literal interpretation of the word), and yet he discouraged both the men. When did he ever appear anxious to increase his numbers? When was it a matter of personal consequence to him to make two into four and four into twenty, and when did he send forth a statistician to schedule the numbers of his flock? Truly this kingdom is not a new miracle, mystery, or arithmetical surprise or success. Arithmetic has nothing to do with it. Christ works slowly but he works continuously, and the end shall come and he will deliver up the kingdom to God his Father, and God shall be all in all, for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, then in all the universe there shall be nothing but radiant, joyous anthem-singing, life and immortality. He did not like men to go away from him, but still if they wished to go, he did not hinder them. Jesus said to his disciples when many turned away and walked no more with him, "Will ye also go away?" He was accustomed to loneliness, he had trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there were none with him. We do not flatter or patronise Christ by the multitudinousness of our number; he asks not for many only, but for much—for the very life and loyalty of the heart.

A second false inference that might be drawn from these answers is, that Jesus Christ had *nothing to offer to his disciples*. He told one man that he would have no pillow for his head, and he told another simply to follow him and let the dead bury the dead. Again and again are we taught that this kingdom of heaven is not a bribe; we are not to go after it for the sake of the loaves and fishes. Jesus Christ never promised a downy pillow: he has many a time darkly hinted at a crown of thorns. Jesus Christ never promised honours and delights and satisfactions of an earthly kind: he always said, "The cross is heavy, and it must be laid upon the weakest shoulder." O thou severe One, what is the meaning of all this? The meaning is in a sentence. || He seeks for truth in us which shall correspond to the truth that is in him. My profession must not be a personal luxury—it must be truth to truth, reality to reality, Christ and his disciples one, as he and his Father are one.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we have heard thy sweet call to come to thine house, and behold we are now here present before thee, with our adoration and confession, with our grateful hymn and with our cry of penitence, and we humbly beseech thee to come to us and to receive what we have now to give. Behold we have nothing to give thee in return for all thy goodness but a broken service. Thou wilt receive it by its meaning and purpose and not because of its own value and desert. We take thy law into our lips, and we break it every syllable: our hands have no clean spot upon them, but within and without they bear witness against themselves. Our heart is a sepulchre, the bottom of which hath not yet been found: our mind is as a chamber of imagery wherein are idols not to be counted, and wherein there are purposes for which there are no human words. Yet dost thou set thy love upon us, nor dost thou withhold thy light from our life. Thou didst send thy Son to seek us, to teach us, to die for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God. He was delivered for our offences, he was raised again for our justification, and we come to thee in his name, wide as the heavens, brighter than all the created flames of light, and we ask thee for his sake to hear us when we cry unto thee.

We have attempted to count thy mercies, and behold the daylight hath failed us. We have set ourselves to the task of numbering thy compassions, and behold we have worn out the shining stars. Thy mercies are more in number than the sands upon the sea-shore, nor is there anything in heaven above or upon the earth beneath that can set forth the number of thy tender compassions. We breathe of thy love, we eat of the bounty of thine hand, we walk in the light of thine eye, we live and move and have our being in God. We cannot escape thee: though we slight thy love, yet dost thou nourish us by thy goodness: though we may not have thy Son to reign over us, yet must we look to thy clouds for water and to thy heavens for light. Thus dost thou lay hold upon us at every point; by thy tender and mighty persuasion dost thou seek to constrain the soul to obedience and homage and love. May we this day answer the great demand with a great joy, and may we flock to thy house as doves flock to the windows, and may there be joy in heaven over all we think and do.

Every heart has its own hymn, every life has its own flower to give thee this summer day. What thou hast given unto us we give unto thee, for we have nothing that we have not received. Thou dost teach the hymn we sing, thou dost inspire every holy prayer we breathe, thou dost give us the words

wherein we besiege thy throne. Look upon each of us according to the poverty and pain of every heart, scatter thy general blessings upon us as thou dost rain the impartial clouds upon the thirsting land, then come to each heart with some peculiar gift. Thou knowest the bitterness of every soul, the dark, awful plague of every heart, thou knowest the crookedness of every life, thou understandest us altogether, and there is nothing hidden from the light of thine eyes. Nourish and cherish every good thing that is in our heart, bring it to beauty and to fruition, and may we all bear abundantly the fruits of the Spirit, and be known because of their richness and plenteousness.

Where the heart is bruised and the spirit is wounded because the chief hope has been blighted and the main light has been put out, do thou come with peculiar tenderness and heal those that are sorely distressed. Where there is yearning for those who wander far, and may even be lost to our human sight, where the parent yearns in great and troubled love for the sinning child, do thou send all the healing of thy long-suffering and redemption. And where the child cries for the lost home, saying, "I will arise and go to my Father," give him power to return, bring him back again to the long-abandoned house, and may he there find the hospitality of great love.

Regard all our friends who are sick, in pain, and in fear of death. Thou knowest how little our life is: our breath is in our nostrils—thou dost frown upon us, and we are gone. O help us according to our weakness, and because our days are very few in number do thou fill them with all the grace of thy blessing, so that we being prepared by thy training and discipline here, born again and sanctified by thy Holy Spirit, may be made meet for that better city, in which the light never sets, where are all the good gathered in immortal convocation, and may we be counted worthy through the blood of the Lamb to take part in their sweet song, and to share with them the benediction which shall encompass eternity.

Do thou look upon all for whom we ought to pray: for the prisoner in the dungeon, for the soldier in the battle-field, for travellers by sea and by land, for all our dear ones in the far-off village, or in the far-off country. O hear us when we sigh for Heaven's blessing to rest upon all after whom our love goes out in earnest desire. Take us all under thy care: rebuke our impatience gently, be mindful of us during the few short flying hours that yet remain to this earth-life, and in the hour and article of death give us that sweet sense of thy presence which shall abolish death. Amen.

Matthew viii. 23-27.

23. And when he was entered into a ship his disciples followed him.

24. And behold there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

25. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. (They record their own helplessness.)

26. And he saith unto them, Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

27. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?

CHRIST'S INWARD PEACE CONTROLLING OUTWARD STORMS.

“**H**E was asleep.” Think of the sleep of the *bad* man ; tired with doing evil with both hands, weary in the cause of wickedness, having done his last bad trick, having worn out his last energy in following that which is evil and forbidden, he falls asleep. Who will talk to him in his dreams—what images will he see in the visions of the night ? Suppose he should never awake, and men should come in the morning to see how he left his work—with a bad purpose broken off, with a programme inscribed to the devil half wrought through—who would care to bury him ? Would it not disgrace a horse to carry such bones to the grave ? Is it not a prostitution of human decency to touch so foul a thing ?

Think of the sleep of the *good* man ; weary in his work of noble benevolence, the spirit willing but the flesh giving way, with the tear half dried that he was just going to cleanse utterly from the eye of sorrow, with the word almost broken off at the middle syllable that he was just speaking in the ear of great distress—overcome by weariness he falls down into a dead sleep. Suppose he should never wake again—who then could tell the world’s loss—who could add up in figures the deficiency that would befall the average of the world’s intelligence and piety and beneficence ? When some men die, they make the world poor, they leave such great gaps behind them : it is as if altars had been broken down and ways to heaven had been shut up, and light that lighted the darkness of life had been put out with a rough hand suddenly.

Do not account too much of the bad man’s sleep, or of the good man’s sleep—no argument is to be founded on the sleep of either. The murderer has slept on the night of his crime, the condemned criminal has slept on the night before his execution, the good man has lost many a night’s sleep by anxieties which he could not control. We are not therefore to make any moral use of sleep or of sleeplessness in the case of particular persons, but all men do sleep, and many may never awaken out of their slumber, and I ask you whose sleep would you like to have, the bad man’s sleep—a weariness that comes out of evil practice, the high and venturous pursuit of forbidden and disastrous prizes, or the good man’s sleep—weariness *in* his work but not weary *of* it,

only going down into the depths of sleep that he may come up as one refreshed, to renew all that was sweetest and noblest and best in his life's toil.

"Let me sleep the sleep of the righteous, and may my slumber be like his." So say we all, but if we would sleep well, we must work well, if we would have the angels at night we must have God during the day. If the darkness is to be jewelled by stars, then must we toil with filial love and ever-heightening delight whilst the sun lasts, to make men wiser and truer and altogether better. Sweet is the sleep of the labouring man, blessed is the slumber of the soul that does its utmost to please God; it is prefigurative of that rest which remaineth for those who are the servants of the Most High. Look on the bad man's sleep—it is as a beast getting ready for further blood. It is as a man whetting his instrument that he may commit deadlier havoc on society. Who would not pray that such strength might never be renewed? and if any man have strength to say openly, "God forbid he should ever awake again on earth," it would take much piety to keep back the "Amen" from those who heard the supplication.

We have now therefore to deal with the sleeping Christ. He told us that he had not where to lay his head, but the head that is weary is not particular about its pillow. He told the scribe that he had not where to lay his head, and yet in a verse or two farther on, we find him asleep. If on a pillow, it was a borrowed one. He does not contradict himself; whether he have pillow or no pillow, he must sleep. Behold him then in the hinder part of the ship, behold him who said he had not where to lay his head, laying down that very head on a borrowed pillow and sleeping as if he nestled in the heart of God.

What occurs during his absence in sleep? "Behold there arose a great storm in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves." A storm always arises when he is absent. His turning away from us means the opportunity for a storm. We are only at peace whilst he is with us; everything depends upon his nearness. It is not a merely negative condition of things which he leaves behind him—not only is the light withdrawn, but the darkness is seven-fold; not only is the wind troubled, it is troubled even to the point of tempest; not only does the tide roll as usual, but it foams into infinite billows and our little life-ship is tossed

upon it as with scorn, and we are threatened with mortal danger. It has always been so in my life. A sleeping Christ will do me no good, a painted Christ will not be of effective service in my life, a wooden crucifix or even an ivory cross will not help me—it must be the wakeful Christ, with every energy astir, power pouring out of him in every look, and in every movement, the actual, positive, real, personal, living Christ. We are mocked by his figure—we are saved by his personality.

What did the disciples under these extraordinary and exciting circumstances? They came to him and awoke him, saying "Lord, save us: we perish." They came to him, they did not go to one another. For a long time we may seem to be equals; we speak about the average of human strength and human intelligence; we say all men are tolerably much the same, it is a long broad line of equality stretching over the whole human sphere, and human nature may have its ups and downs, but as a whole it is almost upon a level. Then there are great crises in the family when the chief man is sought out in a moment. We know him, he cannot be disguised; he may be asleep, but he is the chief; he may be out of the house but he must be sought for. I thought we were all equal? So we are, when we are all cold, when there is no immediate necessity, when there is no wolf with open mouth and gleaming teeth and eyes of fire standing at the front door. But let a *crisis* supervene in the family and the least child in the house intuitively turns its eyes in the right direction. The servant seeks the master, the weak calls for the strong, there is always a point of *supremacy*.

So in the nation: when there is nothing particularly stirring, we are all about equal, we lay down the great democratic doctrine that one man is as good as another, and constitute ourselves into a mutual commendation society, and speak of one another as if we were of one height, of one compass of mind, of one common integrity of heart. Suddenly a great crisis arises; then our little and comfortable doctrines all depart; then the man of stature stands up; then we know to whom to look, or, not knowing, we divine and guess, and by force of conjecture we create the man and make him the king of the hour.

If anything should occur in your business of an extraordinary nature you will soon find out who the principal is. If your business

should proceed in the ordinary course little or no notice will be taken of you. People will not know, perhaps, whether you are in or whether you are out ; if out, how long you will be in coming in ; but let any particular crisis arise, and you will be named, you will be the necessity of the hour, and there will come into your heart by the grace and presence of God the energy that will meet the hour and stamp it with conquest.

The disciples not only came to Christ—they came in the *right spirit*. “Lord,” said they,—how is it that we give the right names when we are in the right mood ? How is it that we create terms to meet necessities ? Suppose you had met those men on the road in a quiet hour and had said to them, “Now, doctrinally, who is this man you are following ?” Probably their answer would have been superficial, or ambiguous, or inadequate. You might easily have led them in the direction of doubt ; it would not have been difficult to have troubled their incipient faith with many a dash of scepticism. But perishing, in trouble, the next breath the last, they seize him and call him “Lord.” It will be so with a great many, perhaps with some too late. Many will say to him in that day, Lord, Lord ; and he will profess unto them that he never knew them. Some confessions come too late ; some homage destroys itself by its tardiness. Why should we not use our calmness, our self-possession, our faculties at their richest and best, and make recognitions of Christ’s relation to us whilst we are in a fit state of heart and temper to make them with intelligence, and breadth, and cordiality ? Do not believe the cold-blooded tempter or evil speaker, or sceptic, or infidel ; he is a mighty man when there is nothing to fear. I do not know how far some mockers will be able to carry their mocking when grim death with bony grip seizes their flesh. We shall hear of them *then*—till then we do not touch them.

Not only did they come to the right man in the right spirit, but the disciples came with the right *request*, saying thus—observe the completeness of that word and its marvellous moral emphasis—not “Help us,” not “Join us in a common endeavour to save the ship” ; not the address made to Jonah, “Arise and take thy share, and call upon thy God as we have been calling upon our gods ;” not, “Let there be a common appeal to the distant heavens ;” but “*Save* us : take the whole case into thine hand ; we fall back and

are nothing—go, thou mighty One, almighty One, to the front to save us.” We cannot do without that word *save*. It gets around the whole compass of our necessity; it touches with a marvellous pathos all the pain of our moral distress. Jesus Christ, the Son of man, came to seek and to save that which was lost. His name was called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins. He is mighty to *save*: he is called the Saviour, the Man with the long arms, the Man with the infinite strength, whose touch is emancipation, whose look is benediction. He saved others—himself he cannot save. Thank God! If he could come down from that cross, morally, he would ruin the world.

With what prayers have we come to Christ? Have we asked him to enter into co-partnery with us in the doing some business in life? Have we said to him that we should be pleased if he would make out what is lacking in our own strength, that we might with two-fold power address ourselves to some difficult engagement? I wonder not that the prayer lies in the air somewhere, a wasted thing, a bird with wings too weak to get beyond the cloud line. We must go to him with our emptiness, we must have nothing in our hands, we must have nothing but a great distress to hurl upon his ear, and we must use words that will show him that our self-renunciation is complete and hopeless. If you had uttered big prayers, you would have had big answers. If you have nibbled at the heavens—I wonder not that their dignity has been offended. Let us go to Christ with nothing to recommend us, with our blindness, deafness, dumbness, our complete necessity, then we shall see how he will answer the mute appeal of our helpless condition.

What answer does Christ make to those perishing disciples? “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” The quiet soul always brings quietness. You say of certain persons in your own house, when they come into the chamber of affliction, they seem to centralize and to quiet everything; their composure is so serene, their self-possession is so complete, that they bring with them half a deliverance from the distress that was overwhelming you. See the *physician* in excitement, and everybody in the sick-chamber goes down; see his face quiet, hear his voice untroubled, feel his grip firm, and at once everybody in the sick-chamber takes heart again. The doctor does not know how his face is

being searched by eager eyes, and if there be a flush in it or a wave of suppressed feeling, it is interpreted to mean disaster of the most appalling kind. The quiet soul brings quietness, the Son of Peace brings peace—he creates peace.

There is only one storm to be feared, and that is the storm of unbelief. Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith? There is only one loss to be deprecated, the loss of faith. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." I may lose health, money, friends, power, but if I have not lost my faith, I have lost nothing. I shall come up again. Destroy this body and in three days I will raise it again. Blessed are those whose faith is greater than the power of destruction that lies around them.

Lord, increase our faith. Faith is power, faith is peace. Pray only for faith, for that wondrous ability to trust which he exercised and manifested who said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." My last look shall be a prayer, my last heart-throb shall be towards the heavens: if he has torn me, he will heal me; if he has wounded me with all his instruments, on the third day he will revive me, and in my greater joy I shall forget my lesser woe. Lord, increase our faith—our heart's faith; we do not mind so much about our intellectual faith—it is here and there, and any fool can twist it—but see thou to our heart's faith, that deep inner trust that lays hold of thee with pertinacity that cannot be shaken off. Lord, increase our faith.

I cannot give up the miracles, because I should be giving up the great doctrine that *mind* is greater than matter, and without that doctrine we should be poor indeed. I hold to the supremacy of mind; my belief is that the spirit is the mightiest force in creation. GOD is a Spirit. If we had less body and more spirit we should be quieter, mightier, wholly grander. I will not have it that the sea is mightier than mind: I would cling to the belief that there is a fire in man that can astound the sea and awe it into submission. The time will surely come when mind shall be acknowledged to be supreme, when the Book that speaks what are now romances because of our coldness will be proved to be speaking words of truth and soberness. If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed ye would say to this mountain, "Out of the

way," and it would be cast into the depths of the sea. I am not content to dwell in the lowlands of the merely material and measurable, in a kind of conscious imprisonment. I would say with the great Pascal, to the sun, "I am greater than thou: thou couldst fall and crush me, but I should be conscious of defeat, whilst thou wouldst be unconscious of victory."

Be careful how you allow *mind* to be displaced from its *regal position*. It is a reflection fraught not only with supreme intellectual grandeur, but with the most exquisite moral pathos, that the *word* shall be mightier than the difficulty external, that the "I will" shall abolish death and fill up the grave and plant its face with the flowers of victory. Do not too readily yield to those persons who would snub your mind and magnify the mountain outside of you. The mountain is but huge mud, the sea but infinite water, the body but an invention for the moment, but mind—God is mind: God is a spirit. There are difficulties from the other side of the case, but they are nothing compared with the difficulties that would immediately be created by the displacement of mind from its royal elevation.

Jesus gave commandment to depart unto the other side, and a storm arose. Learn that storms may arise even whilst we are in discharge of plain and divinely commanded *duty*. If these men had taken the ship at their own suggestion, and attempted to cross the sea for their own convenience, we should speedily have visited upon them the penalty that they were worthy of the storm which overtook them. Let us learn the brighter lesson and encourage the grander faith. Storms may arise even in discharge of duty. Do not create your own difficulties. You are a child of God, and you have a great sorrow to bear. Do not reason that if you were a child of God you would not have any sorrow—that would be sophism, not high and correct reasoning. You have a great difficulty in your business; do not reason that you have missed your providential way because you are encountering this terrible obstacle. The disciples were actually obeying Christ at the very moment the storm seized their vessel—so it may be with you. These things come not for the deepening of your fear, but for the quickening, the enlargement and the completion of your faith.

Danger will always move men to prayer—I will not guarantee that their prayers will be answered: the prayers of the wicked are

an abomination unto the Lord. There are some of us who never pray but in danger—I dare not pledge that God will be present to hear. He may be—his mercy endureth for ever, but if he were less than God, he would not be. Your own mother would not be ; you have worn out the last filament of her love. Your own father would not be : his eyes have been cried out with tears that boiled. If God were less than God, you would not lay hold of him even in the bitterness of your agony. You may do so—it will be because he is God and Father.

The upshot of the whole was that the men marvelled. A poor outcome, a miserable *dénouement*,—they marvelled. We are like them, we are great at wonder, we are geniuses in the matter of being open to surprise and amazement. We can do any amount of wondering. There is a wonder that is legitimate, there is a wonder that is akin to worship, there is a surprise that may lead to faith. With such surprise may we be well acquainted, but beware of the round eye and the open mouth of vulgar wonder which stares at a miracle as at a show, and encourage that holy amazement which looks, then shuts its eyes, and then falls down in prayer.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, hear thou the petition of every heart offered in the sweet name of Jesus Christ, the name that is above every name, associated with the cross and with the crown. Every heart has its own cry, every life knoweth its own bitterness, and we are all here before thee now to tell thee the tale of our sorrow, and sing our hymn of joy in thine house, and to ask thee for such mercies as our wasting life may yet require. Thou hast done great things for us whereof we are glad; thou hast done everything for us—we have done nothing for ourselves; of thine own have we given thee; we have lived at thy table; the water we have drunk has flown from fountains of thy making; and behold there is not a hair upon our head that is not numbered, nor is there a step taken by our feet which thou dost not notice. Thou hast beset us behind and before, and laid thine hand upon us; and the air is full of thy presence, and musical with thy voice. We desire to see thee, and to feel thee everywhere—leave no vacant place, chill us not by thine absence, thou loving One, whose heart is the sun of all worlds, warming them and making them beautiful, and clothing them with all the beauty of joy.

Come to us in thine house and make it a pleasant place to us—yea, make it the chosen place where thou wilt reveal thyself to our vision, to our expectant love, to our broken and contrite hearts. We bless thee that though we may not know thee by our understanding, we may know thee by our love; though thou dost shut thyself out from our ability, thou dost reveal thyself to our sin, and pain and want. We see thee through our tears; we know thee by the subtle processes of the heart; we feel thy nearness, though we have no word to explain thy presence.

We have hastened to thine house that we might be caught in the plentiful rain which thou dost pour down upon the inheritance of thy possession. Spare none from the gracious baptism; let the reviving shower fall upon every heart, the meanest, the obscurest, the least before thee; and may we return to our abodes as men who have felt the presence of God and been lifted up by all that makes his presence what it is.

Thou hast shown unto us sore affliction; thou hast dug the grave too deeply sometimes for our poor faith; we have not been able to follow thee as thou hast dug thy way down to the very rocks, that in the pit thou mightest hide all the beauty that made our eyes glad. Thou hast shown us great and sore trouble; that which we have straightened out thou hast made so crooked that we can never straighten it again. Our first born has become a liar, and our last born has run greedily after the devil, and our house is a place of emptiness. Thou hast sent a blight upon our fields, and suddenly turned away the tide of

our prosperity ; thou hast given us days of anxiety and nights of sleeplessness ; and as for our poor strength, thou hast utterly withered it away.

Yet hast thou given us joys which could only have grown in heaven : thou hast blessed our eyes with light, thou hast set round about our table all pleasant things ; no grave hast thou dug except it has been in the garden, where the flowers have hidden its hideousness ; and thou hast not smitten us but in love, and if the stroke has been severe the kiss of thy love has been all-healing. Truly thou hast spared nothing from us ; thou hast given us thine own Son. So hast thou dealt with our life so that it is all hill and dale—a strange, mysterious undulation, now rising up into heaven, and now deepening swiftly into places we dare not enter. Deal with us as thou wilt. If thou wilt take the last lamb, take it—not our will but thine be done. If thou wilt pluck the last flower, pluck it : it was thine before it was ours ; it is only ours because it is thine. If thou wilt send us prosperity, send us modesty along with it ; if thou wilt greatly revive us with wondrousness of increase of life, then do thou touch the heart that it may be ready to answer thy greatest gifts with sweet hymns and solemn psalms of trust and love.

The Lord send a blessing to every one of us ; may each heart have a line from heaven ; let an angel sing in every ear ; let no man feel himself lonely to sadness ; let no heart shiver under the coldness of absolute isolation. Revive our best memories, relight our noblest hopes, kindle the passion of our early enthusiasm for Christ and his kingdom, and this day may men return from afar wandering, and with tears and love and trust and yearning, gather around the cross of the Lord Jesus and give to the Lamb of God, the Saviour of the world, their repentant and undivided heart. Amen.

Matthew viii. 28-34.

28. And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

29. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God ? art thou come hither to torment us before the time ?

30. And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.

31. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

32. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine ; and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.

33. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told everything, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.

34. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus : and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

THE SUPREME MIRACLE.

THIS is decidedly the worst case that has yet come up in the sacred narrative. There is always a *testing* case in every ministry. There are critical hours in every life. Jesus has been

with wondrous placidity dealing with diseases of many kinds, touching them, and healing them, and driving them away; but most of the cases appear to have been what we should term of an ordinary kind, though there was nothing ordinary in them from any point of view but his own. That which is commonplace to him is a miracle to us; that which is a miracle to us was a commonplace to him. We do not occupy the same ground, we do not look at things from the same angle of vision. Here is a test case, and it makes me tremble. I have never seen Christ confronted after this sort before.

The men were exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. There was no mistake about the terribleness of this possession. The devils had been in the man a long time: he was naked; no house could hold him; he dwelt in the tombs; he was driven of the devil into the wilderness—the case was extreme; it makes me tremble; it turns all other incidents into ordinary events. How will Jesus Christ do *now*? We have put that question regarding one another in critical circumstances when great distress has come upon the life, when a loss of property has been threatened, when particular audiences have assembled for the purpose of giving judgment—in many other varieties of human experience we have asked concerning our friend, How will he carry himself *now*?

Whilst we are wondering what Jesus will do there is a cry of fear from the other side. He was working when we did not suppose he was doing anything; he was giving one of those silent looks which eloquence cannot follow in descriptive terms; he was troubling the hidden devils with light which they only could see. The cry of distress comes from hell. Is there something in Christ's face, that troubles the evil one? Is there anything in that calm, serene, majestic look which makes hell afraid? He alone was quiet. By-and-by it will be seen that this is the exact relation between parties in the universe: the good triumphant, the wicked cowardly and afraid. It does not look so now, because the wicked are too demonstrative to show their real character: they make a noise to keep their courage up, they fill their ears with their own vulgar din, and imagine that there is no other voice

appealing to them. If I look at society from one point of view I am utterly disheartened—my hope goes out of me : it is evidently devil-ridden and hell-bound, and nothing can stay it in its awful course ; perdition must enlarge its borders to receive our enlarging civilisation. When I gather into one all the evil thinkers and evil doers that are in the world I feel that evil has the upper hand, and that God himself is but a theological term.

Then, again, we come upon incidents that give a new point of view and a new reading of human events. We see that God is not dethroned : when the true collision comes the result is won by a *look*. God is to do wonders by the brightness of his face : the silent glance is to be as a sword before which nothing that is evil can stand. The ever-speaking but ever-silent face, gleaming with light, glowing with fire, is to make its way through the universe, and to leave heaven behind it. Oh, thou speaking man, and book-writing man, evangelist, apostle—call thyself by what name thou wilt, this conquest is not to be won by *our* noise, or fuss, or high demonstration of religious zeal—all this is right enough in its own place ; it is part of the plan ; it hath pleased God to do certain things by the foolishness of preaching ; but *the devil is to be burnt out with the divine look*. Hold thy little light aloft ; speak thou mightily or gently, in thunder or whisper as thou wilt, and do what little lies within the scope of thy little power ; but understand that the final deposition of the devil, and the ultimate setting up of the dominion that is divine and beneficent, is to be done by the breath and the power and the glory of God. A nation shall be born in a day, the light shall fill the heavens in a moment, and the earth shall lose her cold shadows, and in the new warmth that shall penetrate her veins she shall give up her dead, and be scarred and seamed no more by tombs and sepulchres and sanctuaries of death.

Read the histories as given by Matthew and by Luke, and regard them as completing one another, and as forming substantially the same incident, and you will see from its graphic colouring what man may become. Do not make little local anecdotes of these divine histories ; do not let the years grow between you and the Book of God till they separate you as by a thick wedge from all that is venerable and true in history. This incident is occurring to-day. If I have to wander over a wilderness of eighteen

hundred years to get at it I shall tire on the road. It occurs next door—to-morrow it may occur in our own house.

See here what man is, what man may become—what man really is in the sight and estimate of God. If you would profit by this incident see yourself in it. It is an evil temptation, one that will deplete you of every true sympathy and right conception of history and of the future, which leads you to think that this incident occurred once for all, and became an exciting and romantic anecdote in the neighbourhood in which it took place. *You* are the demoniac : *I* am the possessed with devils : they have never awakened yet altogether, but some of them are beginning to open their eyes, and to turn in restlessness, as if about to rise. Why will you put the Bible away from you thousands of years, and talk of Moses as if he were a dead man, and of the evangelists as though they lived only in epitaphs? These things are round about us *now*. When John Newton, the celebrated clergyman, saw a man being taken away to the scaffold to be hanged, he said, "There goes John Newton but for the grace of God." You cannot tell what you are ; that is no merely earthly fire that burns in your blood. If you want to see what you may become go to the madhouse. It is an awful church, it is a terrible sanctuary ; but if you want to see what you are made of go to the madhouse, into its very vilest and most appalling quarter, where no wise word is spoken, where no noble look ever illumines or elevates the human face, where no prayer to heaven is ever spoken, where there is violence extreme, cruelty only kept from its proper issues and outcomes by iron and granite, and all the forces of the most watchful civilisation. Pick out the worst specimen of that madness, and see yourself in those eyes of fire and those cheeks livid with excitement, and in that whole frame shaken and torn by passions that cannot be controlled. I am afraid you have been too daintily reared ; I tremble lest you are the victims of your own respectability. There is no respectability in the sight of God. We see the contrast between the madman and the philosopher. That contrast is nothing as compared with the contrast between the sinner and what God meant him to be when he made him a man, and that appalling contrast is for ever in the sight of him that made us.

When I take this view of human nature, which is the only

fundamental and profound view, all others being shams and tricks of an inventive immorality, I see our need of Christ. The doctor can heal my skin, the nurse can cool my brow, a friend may be able to lull me to momentary sleep in which I may forget my troubles; but when it comes to the point of agony, and I see the heart as it really is, and feel it as if it were on fire of hell, then I know that no water can quench it, but only blood can answer the great distress. You may whiten the sepulchre, you may make the outside of the cup and platter clean, you may look good to the eye that rests upon the skin, but to the eye that reads the inner life and sees every filament of your heart—to that eye we are wounds and bruises and putrefying sores.

The physiologist tells me that in every two square inches of the human brain there are two hundred million of fibres, each of which can receive a mental impression. I am lost in these astronomical figures. A hundred million of fibres in one square inch of the human brain! No *theologian* told me that, but the *physiologist*, a man whom everybody is ready to believe. That these should be kept for one hour is surely the supreme miracle of heaven. That these should be wrong and think amiss, and move the whole life in a forbidden direction, what is it but a tragedy that might make all heaven rain oceans of tears? It is a terrible thing to live, it is an appalling thing to be a man; there is but a step between the best of us and madness—yea, they who make psychology a study tell us that thin is the veil that separates genius from insanity.

There are people who would rather have devils in the land than have Jesus Christ. The whole city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts. The devils have to ask their places at Christ's hand: their power of trespass is great, but it never impairs the divine dominion over them. "Do not drive us out of the country, suffer us to go into the swine, tell us where we have to be;" and he says, "Back." He orders them behind: like hounds that are afraid of his voice they make way for him. No man had passed that way before; when the Son of man passes that way he clears a space for himself. You have seen "Christ leaving the Prætorium"? The dominant idea of that grand picture to me is that as he comes down the steps the whole space enlarges to let

him through—nothing comes within touch of him. Somehow the great painter has thrown back the space and given him room enough to show the King in.

Now that his great conquest is completed the people who had lost their swine came to him and besought him that he would depart out of their coasts. It was not impiety; it was a great fear. There are some people who can only live in the commonplace; who hide themselves in the cellar when it thunders and lightens. They could do with a great excitement in the neighbourhood if it were far enough off, somewhere among the tombs, with a noise now and then caught in the wind that made them get closer together; but the great fear that came into their hearts when Jesus came was too much for them, their commonplace was rudely shaken, and they could not live in the excitement of such a presence. It is one of two things with this Christ when he comes into a place; it is deadly fear or infinite rejoicing: he is a savour of death unto death, or of life unto life. He never comes in merely as a respectable citizen a few inches higher than his neighbours: when he comes the land cowers in great fear or lifts itself up in jubilant delight and religious rapture. Do not believe in your Christianity if your hearts are cold. Christianity is nothing if it be not the supreme passion of life. If Christianity does not put everything else down and set its regal foot upon them, you have only entered into the letter, you have not come under the inspiration and blessed dominion of its spirit.

Are there not those who beseech Jesus Christ to depart out of their coasts because of the effect of high religious conviction and noble Christian sentiment? Are there not persons who put trade above man? What is a man compared to a good balance-sheet? What does it matter what becomes of the *man* if the *master* is all right? What do I care what becomes of my servant if I am happy? Of what concern is it to me what becomes of the weak so long as I am strong? There are cases which come before me as a public man which cannot come before you in your strictly private capacity, which make me weep with sadness, and I blame some of you for some cases of oppression and distress which disfigure and debase our civilization: I include myself in the waiting curse. That women should be sitting and making

twelve of your carpet bags for eighteenpence, that women should be standing day by day behind the counter till their limbs swell and blacken and they can stand no longer, that women should be made to decorate your apparel at wages which will not give them one single hour of relaxation or wholesome country air—what is this but preferring devils to Christ? I do not know where the wrong is, altogether: it is not a wrong you can lay your fingers upon and throttle, it is a widespread wrong, and nobody is responsible. Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider? When he maketh inquisition for blood will he not identify this and that man and yonder fine lady and demand the price? It is not an easy question; there are faults on many sides, and probably the whole fault cannot be accumulated and set down at any one man's door. Therefore I would speak with forbearance as to the direct application of these doctrines in particular instances, but do not let us run away from the solemn fact that there are people in the world who would set *trade* above *man*.

There are those who calculate the expense of social regeneration, there are journals that calculate how much the missionary societies have expended, how many conversions they can trace, and they have divided the one set of figures by the other. What can you expect from such men? Incapable of religious enthusiasm, they are incapable of social justice. There are those who would ask how many swine there were and how many men were cured, and they would divide the one set of figures by the other, and talk about the statistical result. I hold that if one soul can be converted in this house, it was worth building the place for, if it should be burnt down to-day. We should work for men; our whole passion should be *human*; if one poor little child could say to me, "Till your church was built I never knew Christ: having come to it I see him now to be fairest among ten thousand and altogether lovely, and I give myself right to him, if he will take so unworthy a thing"—if *that* could be the result of this ministry, it was worth all the trouble and all the money, ten thousand times ten thousand over and over again, and multiplied by the number of all the stars of heaven. Let us take this view of our work. It is something to enliven a human heart, to lighten one human burden, to dry one human tear. If I could have the joy of thinking that this had

been done by any exposition of this narrative, whatever might be set upon the other side would be less than the small dust of the balance.

The people besought Christ that he would depart out of their coasts. They accorded him a negative treatment: they did not violently thrust him out, they courteously besought him that he would go away. I have more hope of those who violently treat him than of those who politely decline to have anything to do with him. You are sitting there to-day saying of yourself, "I have never made any *profession* of religion." The greater your shame. You have besought Jesus to depart out of your coasts: you have no high feeling against him, you never profaned his name by vulgar desecration; you attend a religious place of worship, but you make no profession of Jesus Christ's name. You, on the other hand, say that you leave all religious questions *alone*. You have besought Jesus that he would depart out of your coasts intellectual, speculative, imaginative, practical, ideal. He is not within your coasts at all—you have besought him to go away.

Read the next verse in the next chapter. "And he entered into a ship and passed over." He may go then? Truly. We can get rid of him? Yes, yes. He will not be an eternal torment? No. He will not always strive with me—I can shake him off? Yes, you can—*will* you? I can banish him? Yes, yes—you can stab him to the heart, you can spit upon him, you can smite him on the head, you can crucify him, you can get rid of him—but if you do get rid of him do not come at last and beg to be admitted into the heart that you have wounded. Be consistent throughout. Will you get rid of him? Come, say, "My Lord, my God, cast the devils out of me, make me a sanctuary, a living temple—abide with me." That is the better course. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.

Come into our house, Jesus, and dine there, and sup there, and stop the night there, all the night, the life-night, till the day dawn and the shadows flee away.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou art very good, else why do the sons of men live before thee? Their hands are stretched out in rebellion, their feet are swift to run in ways of evil, and their hearts are as chambers of imagery in which they commit daily idolatry. Yet dost thou spare them as if thou hadst need of them, thou dost not sweep them off the face of the earth, thou dost continue their generation from age to age. Surely thou dost remember thy covenant, and thine oath is not forgotten in heaven; thou dost keep the seasons on their wheels, never dost thou stop the gracious procession—spring and summer and autumn and winter, seed-time and harvest thou hast ever given unto the sons of men, nor hast thou drowned their earth again with water, nor burned it with infinite conflagration. Behold thou dost surely love us, and in thine heart is a secret place for the children of men. Thou didst create us in thine own image and likeness; we bear the superscription of God; we are ruined indeed, but in our ruins are traces of majesty. Surely thou wilt redeem us, though it be at great cost; in our redemption thou wilt not spare the blood of thine own heart; thou shalt see of the travail of thy soul and be satisfied, and with a great inbringing shalt thou draw the nations near and unite them in one offering of praise. We cannot see how this is to be done, the horizon is full of clouds, the whole firmament is charged with thunder, the earth is out of course, and the foundations are shaken—we cannot tell how thou wilt do this miracle, but thou wilt do it, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Thou dost not take again thy words, thou dost not cause thy promises to evaporate, thou dost redeem thy word and turn thy promises into the facts of human history.

We therefore renew our faith, we relight the lamp of our hope, even in the sanctuary itself, and with thy holy book open before us we take heart again, and proceed to do what duty and service we can, knowing that those servants are blessed who shall be found waiting and working for their Lord. Thou hast done wondrous things for thy Church: her stones thou hast laid with fair colours, and her foundations with sapphires, her windows have been of agates, and her gates of carbuncles—no treasure hast thou spared, the whole of thy treasures have been gathered around thy Church to make her beautiful as the Lamb's bride. Continue thy gracious work, give grace upon grace, withhold not thy Holy Spirit; by still mightier inspirations and still further baptisms of grace do thou work in thy Church and upon it, until it shall be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, a glorious Church, a lamp lighted by the Lord's hand.

We bless thee for all thy Fatherly, Motherly, Shepherdly care. Our house is still standing, the fire is still burning, and the table is still spread. The little

child is in the cradle, and the old man in the arm-chair, and the window is full of light, and the birds gather around the roof to sing their summer song. Thou dost give us meat in desert places, and water in sandy deserts: thou dost go before us and make footprints on the road lest we go in the wrong path, and stumble and fall. The very hairs of our head are all numbered, thou dost count our heart-beats, thou dost beset us behind and before and lay thine hand upon us, and no good thing dost thou withhold from our life. 'Thou dost always give an additional blessing, thou art always giving, thou livest to give, thou didst give thine only-begotten Son, and this is our pledge and covenant that all else shall be imparted to us.

Help us to understand our life and our calling, and to arise as those who are called by the master in the morning, to do a long day's work, with all heartiness and cheerfulness. Make a man of the weakest of us, turn the sick of the palsy into one able to carry with ease his own bed, rouse the lethargic and the indifferent, make the young zealous of thy glory, inflame them with the fire of heaven, and may they this day consecrate themselves at the open altar, with oaths that cannot be recalled.

Comfort the aged with tenderest solaces, speak a word to ears that are deaf to all voices but thine own, and may thy gentleness make us great and thy forbearance give us heart again every day. Regard the sick, the afflicted, the incurable, the broken-hearted: look upon those who are withdrawn from the crowd and strife of life and put aside that they may know the bitterness of affliction and the keenness of mortal pain: they long to be amongst their fellow-creatures, to carry higher the banner of the heavens, and to take part in all the beneficent activities of life; but thou hast laid burdens upon them which crush their strength, and thou hast stabbed them with pains which keep them in the shadow. O thou who dost as thou wilt—no angel strong enough to hold back thine arm—thou wilt not keep back the grace from those to whom thou hast shown sore distress.

We pray that every hospital may become as a sacred church this day, that all the wards in which are found the sick and the ailing may be visited as it were by angels from heaven who shall speak gospels and consolations to those who are hidden in the darkness, and who are unable to exercise the functions of life.

Let the Lord's blessing be nigh us, and we shall have no fear, let God's light be in us, and we shall know no darkness, let the Lord bind us to the sacred cross, and altar of atonement, and our blackest sin shall have no power to torment our soul. Amen.

Matthew ix. 1-8.

1. And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.
2. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed; and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.
3. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.
4. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?
5. For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?

6. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.

7. And he arose, and departed to his house.

8. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

THE SICK OF THE PALSY.

"**A**ND he entered into a ship and passed over and came into his own city." That does not tell us half the truth. A reference to this verse will show you the necessity of reading the Scriptures through, and of paying attention not to the text only, but to the context. Anybody would think, from reading this first verse, that Jesus had, upon his own will and motion, returned into his own city: we should have no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that Jesus did this because he wanted to do it or had willed so to do. Is there not a cause? Refer to the verse which concludes the previous chapter if you would find the key of the verse which opens the ninth chapter. "Behold the whole city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts, and he entered into a ship and passed over." Now the whole case is before you. You thought he came away spontaneously, whereas the fact is he was driven out. He never leaves the human heart of his own will; he never said to any one of you, "I have been here long enough, I must now leave you to yourself."

But you tell me that Jesus Christ is no longer with you, you say you sigh to think of happier days, you recall the hour when Jesus Christ was the only guest of your heart, and now you mourn that he is no longer present in the sanctuary of your consciousness and your love. He never left of his own accord. I cannot allow your mourning to go without one or two sharp and piercing inquiries. How did you treat him—did his presence become a shadow in the life—was his interference burdensome—did he dash some cups of pleasure from your hands—did he call you to sacrifices which were too painful for your love? Search yourselves and see. I never knew him leave a human heart because he was tired of it, weary because he had expended his love upon it—but I have known him whipped out, scourged away, entreated to go, banished.

“And he entered into a ship and passed over and came into his own city.” How he looked as he did so! No picture can ever tell us how the eyes fell upon the dust in shame for those who had desired his banishment. How his heart quivered under a new and sharp pain as he realised that he was indeed despised and rejected of men! How he felt as his good deeds became the occasion of a desire on the part of those who had seen them to send him away from their coasts! This is a mystery on which there is no light. Do not imagine that you began the story with the first verse of the ninth chapter. It is true that Jesus entered into a ship and passed over, but it is also true that the people besought him that he would depart out of their coasts. So when my heart is empty of his presence and I wonder whither he has gone, I will revive my recollection, I will command my memory to be faithful and to tell me the white truth, the candid fact, and when it speaks it will shame me with the intolerable reminiscence that I *besought* him to go. Let us be honest, or we shall never be healed, let us face the stern, fierce facts of life, or we shall make no progress in purity or in spiritual knowledge.

“And behold they brought unto him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed, and Jesus, seeing their faith——” Is it possible for *faith* to be greater than the *palsy*? Are such miracles wrought in the consciousness of man? Does the soul ever rise in its original majesty and put the body down? Sometimes. Is it possible for the will to be so inflamed and inspired to rise above the palsy and to say, “I am master!” I like such flashes of the divinity that is within us. We are too easily cowed; our physicians complain that our will does not co-operate with their endeavours, so that we too easily go down. There is something in us that can conquer the palsy. I cannot gather together all the subtle influences which make up the present economy of things, but again and again in the history of others, and now and then in my own history, I have seen such a rising up of the inner nature as has said to the body, “I am master.” I magnify these occasional revelations of the latent force of a kind of suppressed divinity, until I see death dead, the grave filled up, and the whole universe full of life.

Magnify all the *best* hints of your nature; be ready to accept suggestions of new power; never take the little and dwindling

view of your life. If now and then your heart leap up like sparks of fire in prayer seize every one of them. *That* is where your grandeur is; that is your true self. Caught in some mean conception, conscious of some unworthy fancy—know that that is the *leper* that has to be healed. Caught in some rapture of worship, some sweet desire for heaven—know that that is the *angel* that is in you, and that by-and-by nothing shall be left in you but the angel, the true spirit, conqueror through him who wrought its redemption.

“And Jesus, seeing their faith——” That was just like him. He always sees the *best* of us; he never takes other than the greatest view of our life and its endeavours. “And Jesus, seeing their faith.” Shall we amend the text? “And Jesus, seeing their—sectarianism.” That would fill up a line better than *faith*; it is a longer word; it has more syllables in it; it fills the mouth better—shall we put it in? “And Jesus, seeing their—denominationalism.” There is a word that would almost make a line by itself. That word ought to have something in it; polysyllables ought not to be empty. “And Jesus, seeing their—congregationalism, their attachment to Episcopalianism, their deep love of Roman Catholicism.” I fancy we cannot amend the text. We can take out the little word *faith* and put in the long words I have named: these would not be amendments: they would be spoliation; they would be blasphemies; they would belittle the occasion; they would taint it with a human touch. Let the word *faith* stand; it is universal; it is a cord that stretches itself around the star-lit horizon; it touches those of you who belong to no sect, the dumb, the groping, the wondering, as well as the clear-minded and the positive as to religious principle and conviction.

Jesus Christ always startled his hearers by seeing something *greater* in them than they had ever seen in themselves, and always seemed to credit his patients with their own cure. He said, “Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole.” He gave the woman to feel as if she had all the time been her own healer. And the broad and everlasting meaning of that assurance is that you and I have it in us at this moment to get the healing that we need. The physician is here; his prescription is written in syllables clear as stars, and in lines open as the heavens. What he waits for is our faith. Lord, I believe; help thou mine

unbelief. Lord, increase our faith. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Be it unto thee according to thy faith. Believest thou that I am able to do this? There is something then for *us* to do. Find it out and do it, and God will be faithful to his word.

“And Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.” But this was a question of the *palsy*: the man had not come as a *religious* inquirer, had he? I was not aware that Jesus was sitting down somewhere for the purpose of holding religious conversation with people. This man is sick of the palsy; he cannot move a limb; it requires four people to carry him; and Jesus Christ gives a *religious* turn to the event. We want this sick man healed; we do not want to hear anything about *sins*; we are not religious inquirers, we are afflicted men. How we do belittle everything we touch! if we pluck a flower it dies. Jesus Christ said, “All these afflictions have a common root: sin is the explanation of every scab on that leper’s brow; and look at the trembling in that paralytic; sin drove the sight from those eyes, and the hearing from those ears, and the strength from those ankle bones. This is the accursed work of sin.” He is a fundamental Teacher; he does not treat symptoms; he treats the central and vital *cause* which expresses itself in symptoms so patent and so distressing.

This is the great lesson which the world is so unwilling to receive. Give us Acts of Parliament, give us better houses for this class and for that class, give us better drainage and larger gardens and better ventilation, and we shall cobble the world up to stand on its rickety legs ten years longer. All these things are in themselves right enough: no sane man has one word to speak against them. If they be brought in, however, as *causative*, they must be rejected, they are collateral, they are co-operative, they are helpful, and in that sense they are necessary, but the world’s stream will never be pure till the world’s fountain has been cleansed. We think we can cure the world by officialism and by small sanitary pedantries, by congresses and conferences—all these things have their place and their use, but until we get at the root, and core, and centre, and heart, we are as men who are throwing buckets into empty wells and drawing them up again.

The world will not believe this, so the world has not yet risen and taken up its bed and walked.

“And, behold, certain of the Scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.” There again is the belittling which man does in all his interpretations. O, if the sermon could be equal to the text in all cases, what preaching we should have and what hearing! Christ said, “Thy sins are forgiven thee.” The Scribes said, “This man blasphemeth.” We always drag down what we touch: the day of rapture is gone, the sacred hour of enthusiasm has withdrawn itself, because we have besought it to depart. Men never speak in fire now: we have fallen upon an age of prudence; and word measurement, and we are tricksters in the uses of syllables and in the adaptations of phrases, and never get beyond the poor range of little speech, or utter as with the heart those sentences which are revelations. We like to hear the little mincing voice that dare not utter one word louder than another; we like to hear the multiplication table repeated every Sunday from the first line to the last; we like to keep within statistical proofs and references that have been scheduled and that can be verified. The great prophet of fire, Elijah, is gone—were he to come again we would take him by the throat and thrust him into the dungeon.

The Scribes were right from their own point of view. It would have been blasphemy in any one of *them* to have spoken a noble word about anybody. There are some throats that were never made to emit one noble sound. There are men to whom prayers are lies, and revelations are delusions, and prophecies are but the witnesses of the weakness of their speakers. A man cannot hear above his own level. “He that hath ears to hear let him hear.” Every *dog* has ears—yes, but not to *hear*. Men carry the standard of judgment within them; from the little man the little judgment, from the great man the noble criticism, from the divinest, the divinest love. It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men.

“And Jesus, knowing their thoughts——” See how he never relinquishes the *spiritual* line in all this incident. Jesus seeing their faith—that was a spiritual perception: Jesus seeing their thoughts—there is the same power of working mental miracles. He reads our minds; there is no curtain made yet by human

hands, how cunning soever, that can shut out those eyes. He understands every pulsation of the heart, he reads every motion of the will, all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth—sometimes the universe seems to me to be all eyes; I am surrounded by eyes of fire. All speech seems to sum itself into one pregnant sentence—"Thou God seest me."

Do not lightly pass over these words, for they open the great sphere of the *mental miracles* performed by Jesus Christ. We are accustomed to read about his physical miracles and to doubt them. Any Scribe can doubt. It is no great thing to doubt. The doubter never did anything for the world; the doubter never put one stone upon another. The world is indebted to its faith for its life and for its progress. Jesus not only cured the palsy, he read *thoughts*: already he begins to forecast the day when physical miracles shall depart, and the miracles that shall astound shall be heart-readings, and heart-companionships and spiritual revelations, and moral opportunities and destinies. We live in that dispensation now; miracles of an ordinary and outward kind have all gone, but the miracles of the Holy Ghost are being performed every day.

"For whether is easier——" It would appear—for I regard this statement as elliptical—that some thought had occurred to the mind of the Scribes that it was easy enough to say, "Thy *sins* be forgiven thee," but the thing to do was to cure the man of the *palsy*. It was easy to talk blasphemies, but what about performing the *cure*? There was a kind of self-gratulation as they suggested that Jesus Christ had taken the easy course of talking blasphemies and letting the substantial thing that was to be done alone, so he says, "Whether is easier to say, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' or to say 'Rise and walk'?" The Scribes committed the mistake which the whole world has ever since been repeating. Where is there a man who does not think of every intellectual effort as quite easy? It is very difficult for a man to walk upon a tight rope across a river—that is something amazing—worth a shilling to look at, but for any man to preach—why, of course that is easy enough: any fool can do that: everybody knows that anybody can preach a sermon! To suggest a *thought*, to flash an

idea upon the intellectual horizon—any man in a family who is good for nothing else can do that.

We always send the imbeciles into the Church. To go into the army requires a man, and to go into the navy requires a kind of man and a half, and to go into the law requires a good many men, but to go into the *Church*—why, the soft sap of a family will go into the Church. This is possible—possible in relation to all the communions into which the great Christian Church is broken up. There are no doubt soft men and imbecile men in every pulpit in Christendom—that is to say in every section of the Church in Christendom—but do not understand that the intellectual is always so easy. It is sometimes hard work, even to *preach*. There are those who think the spiritual worthless. It is easy to give advice: nothing could be easier than to address oneself to spiritual necessities, and such service is worthless. Whoever thinks of paying a schoolmaster or a preacher?

There are those who think of religion as merely sentimental, as having no practical value in it; yet there is not a man amongst us who does not owe his social status to religion. You would never have had the customers that flock around your counter but for religion; you would never have got your debts collected but for religion; you would never have been saved from the gutter and the workhouse if an angel of religion had not come after you and brought you in. Religion is not a coloured cloud, an evaporating sentiment, it is a most practical factor in the creation and redemption and sanctification of human life.

“And when the multitude saw it, they marvelled and glorified God.” Trust to the great broad human instincts, and do not ask the Scribes what they think. Take your case to the Scribes and say, “Gentlemen, what is your learned opinion about this man’s cure?” and they, having rolled themselves round and round in the thickest bandages of the reddest tape, begin to consider. I have faith in broad human instincts: I will not altogether withdraw from our proverbial sayings—*Vox populi vox Dei*—I know the crowd has been wrong, I know the mob has been out of the way again and again (I am not speaking of mere crowds or mere mobs: I am speaking of the average human instinct all over our civilization), yet it answers the true voice in the long run, it knows the right man, it knows the right cures, it knows the right books.

That human instinct is the next best thing for our guidance to divine inspiration. Make friends of the people, and let little cliques and coteries rot in their own isolation.

Observe the course which Jesus Christ takes, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sin. Arise, take up thy bed and go into thine own house." We must sometimes prove our religion by our *philanthropy*. Sometimes a man can understand a loaf when he cannot master an argument; sometimes a man can understand a kind action done to his physical necessities when he cannot comprehend or apply the utility of a spiritual suggestion: you do not relinquish the ground that the spiritual is higher than the material when you accommodate yourself to the man's weakness and say to him in effect, "You cannot understand this spiritual argument, therefore I will come down to your ground and do what you can understand." Thus the Church must often prove its religion by its philanthropy. The world cannot understand our creed, but the world can understand our collection. There are masses of men in London to-day who could really not understand what I am endeavouring to expound: it is beneath them, or above them, or beyond them, but they will be perfectly able to ascertain what we have done for cases of necessity that may now be appealing to our liberality.

This is God's method of proving his own kingdom and claim. "The goodness of God," the Apostle says, "should lead us to repentance." Every good gift given to the body and given to society is an angel that should lead us in a religious direction. God says to us every day, "That ye may know how to care for your souls, I will show you how to care for your bodies." Now what has he done for the body? Look at that lamp he has lighted, now shining as the southern zenith: look at the meadows he has spread and the gardens he has drawn around our habitations: look at the loving air, the hospitable summer, the abundant autumn, the restful sleep of the winter—and if he has done so much for the body, he says, "But that ye may know what I would do for your mind, for your soul, for your higher faculties, I give you these witnesses, that you can lay your hand upon and examine for yourselves."

It is an argument I cannot refute, it is an appeal I would gladly obey.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we have heard of thine anger, but we have not felt it ; surely thou hast shown unto us only thy love, and made thy goodness to touch us with its gentle hand. We have heard of thy fire, but it hath not scorched us ; we have been warmed by thy summer sun. Thou hast been to us a God of love and tenderness, thine eyes have been full of the tears of pity, in thine heart has been the yearning of a great compassion. Truly thou hast now and again given us one night of weeping, but the tears endured but for the night ; they vanished in the morning ; then thou didst come to us with renewed tenderness, gentler than ever, as if thou wouldst make the night of trouble the beginning of a better and brighter time.

We will speak of the goodness of the Lord, and our memory concerning his mercy shall be vivid, and we will sing unto the Lord of mercy and of judgment, for thy ways concerning us have been ways of compassion, and thy righteousness has been attempted to our weakness. Wherein we have desired to be better, thou hast not scourged us with reproach ; when tears of pity have risen to thine eyes, we have been encouraged to draw nearer to thee. Behold thou dost welcome us at the cross, on the cross we see the manifestation of thy tenderest heart-love, and there we meet thee, having broken thy law, having insulted thy Spirit, and there, by looking away from ourselves to the slain Lamb, the one sacrifice, the infinite atonement, we receive thy pardon, and into our hearts there comes the hush of an infinite peace.

We bless thee for all these revelations of thyself ; they startle us, yet afterward they give unto us the utterest comfort. For a moment they amaze and confound us, and gradually they settle down into the guests of our heart that enlighten and warm and cheer it. Evermore do thou grow upon the vision of our love, fill the whole horizon of our life, shut out every other figure, and destroy the light of every other attraction.

Abide with us, loving Father, loving Son : abide with us, thou Spirit of life and Spirit of fire. We mourn our sin ; it is the tale we tell to every sunset, and it is the tragedy we renew with every sunrise. Our very breathing is sin, our every look is a blasphemy, our every thought is stained with evil or imprisoned within the compass of the mean earth. We are wanting in purity and in nobleness and spiritual freedom, we are the slaves of sin—if the chain be broken in the morning it is riveted anew at night. God be merciful unto us sinners. Thou art still making us, thou art still making man, thou art still redeeming us—whilst the cross stands the great redemption proceeds. Thou wilt have us in thy holy keeping ; thou hast not brought us to this hour of life that thou

mightest put a knife through our heart and cast us away as worthless ones : thou hast not extended the miracles of thy grace upon us that we might be trodden under foot and forgotten of the universe ; thy purposes towards us are good ; thy meaning is inspired by love ; thou hast called us and sealed us and inspired us with holiest hope, and thou wilt not at the last let us drop from the height of the very heavens.

We commend one another always to thy gentle care. When we are weakest, then do thou love us most ; when we are furthest away, then do thou hasten with quickened speed after us, lest we pass the final line and can no more be found. The Lord make our infirmity the ground of his kindness, then shall his mercy endure for ever. Pity us in our littleness, for we are still in the dust ; regard our infirmities with tender compassion, for we are still far from home. Show us thy wonders in the wilderness and shape the stones of the desert into a temple. Give us holy desires after thyself, create in every heart a mighty prayer, let every soul go out after thee like a bird that would find the sun.

Remember all for whom we ought to pray—our sick ones at home, the old man dying, the tender mother pining, the little child all but passing away from the earth it hardly knows, the prodigal, lost of men, beyond every eye but the piercing mercy of thy love, the soldier, the sailor, the traveller on the sea and on the land—let thy mercy go out after all these and thy blessing be upon them according to their several necessities. Omit none from thy benediction.

Bless the land we love the most, and our rightful sovereign the Queen. Guide our legislators and direct our leaders ; teach our judges judgment and give them the spirit of wisdom and of mercy. Prosper all honest commerce, help every honourable man to gain his bread in plentifulness with a clean heart and a spotless hand. The Lord look upon all our educational institutions ; sanctify the efforts that are made there to enlarge, enlighten, and cultivate the human mind ; hasten the time when every one who can sing shall sing thy praise with a loud and cordial voice, when all who are practised in high arts shall turn every beauty and every grandeur towards thy heavens as an offering of love.

The Lord hear us : we shall be gone to-morrow : we have already seen those who have gone before waving their farewells and telling us to come. Keep us back from evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds, establish us in a course of righteousness and nobleness, and bring us in thine own time—the sooner the better, the longer, so must be thy will done and not ours—to the green country, the verdant land, the sweet Paradise, the eternal summer. Amen.

Matthew ix. 9-13.

9. And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew (Hebrew name *Levi*), sitting at the receipt of custom (at Capernaum), and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

10. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat (called by Luke “a great feast”) in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

11. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

12. But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

13. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice : for I am not come to call the righteous ("an ironical admission"), but sinners to repentance.

CALLING TO DISCIPLESHIP.

"AND as Jesus passed from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew." This is a man's account of *himself*. Matthew is the writer of these words. Surely he was most modest, for I know not how his self-description could have been shortened. He simply describes himself as "a man named Matthew," and he says that Jesus saw him as such. There he understated the case. Imagination turns these sweet and modest words into great and noble enlargements of meaning. Jesus saw a *man*. Was he a registrar, numbering the people in ones and twos—was he a mere statistician, putting down the human family in arithmetical figures? He saw a man—he saw more than we mean by that term, he saw that term in all the fulness—shall I say in all the tragedy?—of its meaning. He saw the *ideal* man, he saw the *possible* man, he saw the undeveloped acorn, he saw the germ out of which might come whole Bashans and Lebanons of strong growths.

How easy to pass a man—and how readily it comes to our tongue to call some persons *nobodies*. We are given to the black art of contempt, we take pride in it, we say, "This man is little, and that man is contemptible, and yonder man is nobody," and we hurl our depreciatory adjectives at all and sundry whom we do not care for. Therein we show the little side of our nature. Every man is of some account, every man is somebody ; it takes a Christ to warm us into our best consciousness, it takes a look from those eyes in which the summer shone to warm us into encouragement. Some are soon snubbed, they are easily put down—a frown will send them away backward for a whole week : they can only live in approbation, in the sunshine of kind judgment. When Jesus Christ looks upon a man, he looks him into a nobler manhood. He wants to look at you—why do you avert your face? Turn ye, let your faces meet, and you will never forget his look.

He was a man named Matthew : that name is the only foothold which the writer of this gospel claims for himself in human history. We cannot tell what we write when we write a man's name ; it is nothing to us but something to go by, a mere handle or con-

venience, a sound that is an identity, pointing to a particular individual. But the giving of that name took a whole day in the family long since: it was canvassed, it was made matter of reference, it was carefully balanced with other possible appellations, it was prayed over, it was something snatched from the grave that superior excellence might be remembered, that kind memories might be vivified through the generations to come. Yet how foolishly people name their children, and with what utter ignorance they send them forth with appellations the most misleading, and sometimes involving the most cruel irony or the most laughable burlesque!

It would be an interesting study to collect the Bible names and to go into the reasons why those names were given, and then to show the contrasts and discrepancies between the names and the characters of those who bore them. Our mother Eve said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord: call him Cain." He was gotten from the Lord, but did he ever go back to the Lord? and it is difficult to think that the Lord ever had anything to do with some men. Who can tell? The times are sadly out of joint: there certainly be ironies in our individuality that would seem to exercise the hand of providence from our formation and direction. Yet the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. We are lost, he is in quest of us—can we help him to find us?

"I will," said the daughter of Pharaoh, "call him Moses, because I drew him out of the water." So are our names given: they are monumental names or memorial names: they represent affection, interest, kindness. No child was ever purposely called by the name of a *bad man*. The wicked have no real friends: there be many eagles that pluck them, there are no angels that bless them. Did you call your child by his name because it was the name of a *drunkard*? Did you reason thus with yourself, saying, "My little girl shall bear the name of a woman who was notoriously bad and because she was notoriously bad"? Have I not heard you reasoning just contrariwise and saying, "We will call this child after his good old grandfather, we will call this little girl after her sweet mother, we will call this boy after the name of some illustrious character in history"? When did any man ever go up to the upas tree and pluck one of its deadly twigs and put it into his child's hand to be known by through the handful of his days?

O bad man, nobody likes you: they may smile upon you because they have not yet got the last shilling out of your pocket: they may give you guest room in the house because they cannot decently thrust you into the appropriate kennel—but nobody *loves* you. The memory of the wicked shall rot, the candle of the wicked shall be put out. Only goodness would we immortalise. There is still left in this poor nature of ours that strange instinct to preserve the beautiful: we would crush the poisonous adder; who would willingly slay the singing bird, so blithe, so modest?

“Saul, who is also called Paul.” Thus men like to shuffle off the old name, because they have put away the old character. It is in our power, under the blessing and special call of God, to put away our old names. It is the prerogative of God to give each of us a new name, not the name that was sprinkled upon our brow in the baptismal drops, but a name written on the forehead by an invisible finger and visible to none but the Giver. Have we received the new name? Do we carry the new white stone? Is our brow sanctified and ennobled by a writing not to be read by vulgar eyes, but to be seen by every angel flying in the midst of heaven, is a solemn question. Every man must give his own reply.

“And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom.” In other words he was going about his daily business. He was found, he was sought out, he represents a special class of the Christian elect, of the Christian believer and worker. He was following a despised occupation. There are despised occupations now, there are occupations which never can be forgiven, and that can be said in free England, and in republican France, and in democratic America. There are some trades we recoil from, and yet we are Christian professors and citizens of no mean city. But there are some occupations we would not mention if we could help it. A man who is a chimney-sweeper; who would like to be a relative of his?

There are some of you who do not like to see your brothers when they are in their working clothes. You can do with them on a Sunday, when they have got their best garments on, but to think of your walking with some fine person, and to see your brother come up with his fustian jacket on, what an outlook you take upon the universe, what an inquiry flames into your face as

if you were most astronomically disposed ! There are no *mean* occupations, but there are some very mean occupants ! I do not say that this occupation or that is the best possible in the world. I am not called upon to give any opinion as to the conflicting merits of occupations and professions, but I want to see the man through all the circumstances, as Jesus Christ never failed to do. The Pharisees called Matthew a publican, a tax-gatherer, a sinner, an alien. So was called Zaccheus, but when the turn came of Jesus Christ to speak about Zaccheus, he said, "He is a son of Abraham," and the little man stood up a king. It is so he talks about every one of us. When he sees the very least and meanest of us give a homeward look, he says, concerning such a looker towards the heavens, "He also is a son of Abraham."

"And he saith unto him, Follow me." Is that all ? That is all. Is it not imperative ? It is most absolute. When do kings say, "If you please" ? Who ever goes to see the Queen by her special and humble desire ? I have always noticed that when the Queen sends for any one, she *commands* them. Why, Jesus Christ seemed to have caught the trick of that high royalty. "Follow me," said he. Abolishing every mood and tense fancied and projected by the fertile brains of grammarians, he shut up human speech into the imperative mood. I like to hear his commands ; they were softly spoken, but they were commands at the root and core of them.

He commands you and me just as absolutely to-day. "Follow me, come unto me." That is his gentle command, his imperial but compassionate edict. He never says, "Follow me, to do me any service that I cannot do without." He uttered the word, "Follow," with a tone which meant, "and you shall have all heaven for the following." The very imperativeness of the tone hides a gracious intent. This is no scourging tone that would drive men before it, it is the tone of a complete assurance and a sublime and indestructible purpose, an assurance of his own sufficiency to meet the need, and his purpose to cover all human necessity with the infinite fulness of his unutterable grace. Will you come ?

He did not go to Matthew and raise him from the seat ; he did not employ any mechanical powers for the purpose of drawing Matthew : he launched his word. It is an old way of his, it began

with, "Let there be light, and there was light," as if light had been standing behind the chaotic mass, waiting for the word and could not move until that word was spoken. The Bible is full of commandments, but the commandments are not grievous, they are not the utterances of an arbitrary will, but the subtle pleadings of a heart that lives for us, and that would seem to be unable to live without us.

"And he arose and followed him." How *easy* it is for some men to rise and follow Christ, as compared with others. They seem to fall into the way of faith: it is like bringing the sun to bear upon a bud that wants to open, and that is just waiting for light in order that it might unfold its deep and sacred beauty. It is so easy for some men to pray, they seem to be walking up a gentle green slope to meet God at the height of it. When other men try to pray it is like climbing up a rugged steep rock, some of the stones loose, and if you put your foot upon them you will fall. It is so easy for some men to do the act of benevolence; there are some persons to whom I dare not state a case of necessity, because while I am stating it they are putting forth the hand to relieve it, and others need long pleading and much pressure and detail, the utterance of which becomes a sheer cruelty to the man who has to speak it, before they can advance the smallest testimony of their regard for human suffering.

It is so easy for some people to go to church: they like it, they wait for Sunday; when they open their eyes upon the Sabbath light they say, "Thank God, this is the King's day."

"The King himself comes near,
And feasts his saints to-day."

Other men have to be dragged to church, and the "Amen" of the preacher is like the utterance of an amnesty, so quickly and cordially do they run from the sacred roof. But God is able to conquer our perversity, and to subdue our obdurateness, and to bring the most reluctant to his throne in pious and loyal homage. He will have some of you yet. It was difficult to bring you here this morning, but already your hearts are warming towards him who is the Lord of the house and the King of the day. Perhaps you are saying, "He was certainly kind: he surely took a noble view of us; his utterances were great and splendid gospels; if

they were dreams, they were not gilded, they were of real gold." So far so good : he will have you yet : help his conquest by your consent.

This act of obedience is to be done with all the spontaneity and impulse of love. Christ never drags a man after him : he is no tyrannous God that says, "I will bind you hand and foot, and take you captive." We run with the feet of love, we follow with the credulity of intelligent obedience. My Lord calls me, I must go ; I know his voice, its infinite sweetness, its tender pathos—it fills me like a gospel. Do not suppose that Christ lays a mighty arm upon you and takes you against your will. He never hurls his omnipotence against the sinner : his commands are inspired by love. Hear them : "Rise, he calleth for thee. The Master is come and calleth for thee." No other man ever wanted to see you, no other person ever cared for you. Here is the infinite solicitude, the unmerited and ineffable grace.

"And it came to pass as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples." It was probably in Matthew's house. Matthew was, by all historical accounts, not a poor man, but one who could show hospitality of the kind indicated in this passage. The publicans and sinners came and sat down with Jesus : that was an unconscious tribute. How is it that we are drawn to some people, how is it that we know certain persons whom we never saw before in our lives, what is that singular mystery of kith and kin which we all realize when we have spoken to certain persons five minutes? I have watched the eye of poverty and the eye of grief and want, and I have done so this very morning. A poor creature was waylaying a few travellers, and one after another passed, and her keen and hungry eye saw nothing in them to which she could appeal. Then one I saw pass, and she said, "Pardon me, sir—do not be offended——" How did she know to whom to speak? Is there a masonry of hearts? Are there signs in the face, are there gleamings in the eye, is there something in the walk, are we revelations to one another? Did any poor soul ever stop you to tell a tale of grief? Yes. Thank God for that interruption : it meant a great deal, such woe, hunger, pain and want as stopped you have eyes that can read the heart.

The publicans and sinners got round him as cold people get round a fire. They need no welcome in words; they are cold and here is the fire. If you felt the cold you would draw near to the great fire of Christ's love, and until you do feel it I can do nothing with you or for you but declare in ardent speech the excellence of One who would do you good if you would allow him.

"When the Pharisees saw it, they said, Why doth your Master eat with publicans and sinners?" This is a narrow criticism: it abounds in every time. All men have at least got thus far in the tormenting art of criticism—they are able to find fault. He is indeed a remarkable imbecile who cannot find fault with somebody; he is indeed much neglected in his education who cannot find fault with any sermon he ever heard or with any person he ever saw. "Of all the cants that ever were canted in this canting world, though the cant of hypocrisy be the worst, the cant of criticism is the most tormenting."

How did Jesus reply to this narrow criticism? When Jesus heard that, he said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice—I will have the reality and not the sham, I will have the thing meant and not mere words and tricks about it. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." So Jesus Christ lived in great principles, and so he lived above public opinion, he never lived in defiance of it. It is a poor criticism of our Lord's habit and manner amongst men to say that he defied public sentiment. The true criticism would be that he lived *above* it, he dwelt in the sanctuary of great principles, he worshipped in the temple of universal benevolence. Any fanatic can *defy* public opinion, it requires the divinest of saints to enthrone himself *above* it and to move in his sublime course, impelled by divine inspirations and undegraded by human tempers or social flatteries.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, do thou lead us into all the deeper truth, and save us from the narrowness and meanness of the letter. Give unto our hearts that keen vision which sees thee afar off, and knows the way that thou dost take, though it be hidden in much darkness and be not known to the carnal reason. We would be no longer children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, but would be men in Christ Jesus, having maturity of understanding, largeness of knowledge, trueness and depth of sympathy, and the insight which is a continual revelation. Our aspirations are high and pure, and they are the creation of the Holy Ghost, and the prayer which thou dost inspire thou dost never forget to answer. We would see thee in the sanctuary, we would hear thy goings in all the providences of life, we would behold thy supreme beauty in the Holy Word—help us to realize all these desires in the perfectness of their meaning, then shall our life enjoy a wide liberty, and before our spirits there shall shine an enchanting and contentful destiny.

We bless thee for all thy tender care, thy patience, so great as to be beyond our words to express : thy lovingkindness, thy tender mercy—how shall we speak of these without taking from them the very bloom which is their charm ? Yet must our hearts refer to them in continual delight, for they are the staff and the joy of our life, our great defence, our sure and eternal protection. Thou hast been mindful of us with infinite care ; thou hast still continued unto us all that is precious ; thou hast given unto us health and reasoning power, and a sense of responsibility : thou hast kindled within us lights which are not of the earth, and hopes which are not born of time. Thou hast not forgotten the wants of the body, as thou hast not neglected the cry of the soul ; but we are what we are this day by the grace of God, and to that grace would we now awaken a loud sweet psalm, thanking thee with glowing hearts for all thy wondrous mercies and thy tender kindness.

Thou dost do with us as seemeth good in thy sight. We cannot always tell what thou doest : seldom can we find out why thou doest it, but it is our delight to find our rest in thy power, wisdom, love, and in all the purposes of thine almightiness. We rest in God, we stand in God, we have every answer to every difficulty in God. Not our will but thine be done, for thy will is good and thy purpose is full of mercy. Undertake for us in all the way of life, we humbly beseech thee. When the wind is high and cold and the road is long and steep and lonely, when all things seem to be in a conspiracy against our rest and hope, in the cloudy, dark day, in the starless, cheerless night, on the broad and sunny road, everywhere, on land and sea, in city and wilderness, do thou be at our right hand—then shall we be almost in heaven. Save us from ourselves, protect us from every enemy, destroy the power of every delusion, lift

us above the influence of every prejudice, open our souls to receive the whole light of heaven, and give unto our hearts the steadiness and the courage which can abide in the day of adversity and speak for God and truth in the time of darkness and trouble.

We give thee united and hearty thanks for all thy tender mercies as heads of houses, as fathers and mothers and children and servants, we unite in blessing thee for household gifts, for all domestic protection and comfort : as men whose lot is cast in the world, whose every day sees a battle, and whose every night is broken by sleeplessness, we bless thee that amidst it all we have the shining of thy countenance and the assurance of thy presence and benediction.

Hear us when we pray for those who are not able to be with us and to unite in common prayer. For the sick, for the dying, for the wounded and lonely, for the traveller by sea and land, for all for whom we ought to pray, and after whom our love goes out in searching and sacred desire—the Lord's blessing be multiplied upon them all, brighter than the summer noon-day, tenderer than the dews of the morning.

The Lord help us now to study his word, may we turn over its pages with modest fingers and look into the writings with reverent hearts. May our whole spirit be attuned to the purposes of thy gracious revelation. As for our sin, we know where to bring it, we bring it to the great cross of Christ, we behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world by whom we have received the Atonement. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin, bowing before his cross, trusting to his sacrifice, looking to his ministry, each of us would desire to say, with all the urgency of his heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Amen.

Matthew ix. 14-19.

14. Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not ?

15. And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them ? but the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

16. No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

17. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles : else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish : but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

18. While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead : but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.

19. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.

THE SPIRITUAL LAW.

JESUS CHRIST was always pestered by little questions. It is very seldom, if ever, that you hear a great inquiry propounded to him. Why eat with publicans and sinners ? Why eat with unwashed hands ? Why heal on the Sabbath-day ? Why not fast

more? These were the small enquiries by which those who were immediately around him and were observing him critically or in partial sympathy belittled every occasion. A man is known by the questions he asks. Whoever asks any great question concerning the Bible? Be assured that he who asks the great question gets the great answer, and be not surprised if, in reply to our little and superficial enquiries, we receive shallow and disappointing replies. What is our question when we open the sacred book?

The persons who put this inquiry were honest men. They were not Pharisees, they were the disciples of John, and their question was, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?" These people represented those persons who have only got so far as the gospel of abstention. Many of us are at that point, the very first and meanest in the Christian life. Our Christianity consists in *not* doing things. It is a necessary point in our higher culture: no man can work up the line which has upon it the grim rough words, "Thou shalt not." Yet the purpose of Jesus Christ is to lead us away from the negative gospel and virtue of abstention into the glorious gospel of ample and life-long liberty.

You find persons whose virtue consists in abstention from vice: it is a kind of minus quantity, it is the mere negation of wrong. They will not eat, they will not drink, they will not pursue this pleasure, nor will they follow after that delight, they will not be seen in such and such company—that is their lean and most puny virtue. It is necessary, it is part of the education, but a man ought not always to rest there. Virtue is positive, religion is emphatic, the true spirit is one of liberty. The question, therefore, which we should put to ourselves every day is, how far are we yet in the prison of the letter, and what advancement have we made into the kingdom of liberty? True virtue would, of course, consist in being able to go round the whole circle of legitimate pleasures and yet to keep that circle in its proper place. He has grown up into the fulness of Christ who can sit down with publicans and sinners, who can touch pitch and not be defiled, who can take up serpents and play with them, and can drink any deadly thing and it shall not hurt him; but who has attained that height? That is the grand liberty that is yet to be realised.

They shall take up serpents, and the serpents shall have no power over the hand that grasps them, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them,—the soul shall be so much better than the body, the mind shall have lofty lordship over that which is physical, and the spiritual shall triumph over the material. That is the line along which our education has to proceed. Do not scourge it unduly, do not hasten it with the impetuosity which is not wise. The most of us are yet virtuous simply because we are not so vicious as we might be.

“Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?” Religion is enjoyment, religion is associated with wedding bells and wedding feasts, and wine-drinking, and high delight, and infinite liberty, and cloudless sunshine. He who binds it down to other ideas forces an eagle into a mean cage and bruises its noble wings with iron weapons. He, of course, would be the grand Christian who made every day holy alike, whose Saturday was so holy that his Sunday could not possibly be holier. But we have not yet attained that spiritual excellence, therefore some of us are obliged to set apart one day in the week and to say concerning it, “This day is sacred to religious purposes : we will call it day of rest, day of prayer, day of hope.” When we have completed our Christian education, there will be only one day in the week, and its name will be the Sabbath day, the Lord’s day, every moment a jewel, every breath a waft from heaven, every exercise nobler than prayer, even as noble as praise.

Sometimes this high ideal of religion is unduly forced upon us by thoughtless people, as if it were attainable and realisable here and now by every professing Christian. Let me protest against such undue urgency. We are travellers, and therefore we go one step at a time. We are mounting a ladder, and the rule is, one round at once ; when we get to the top the ladder may be burned, for we have mounted to the very sanctuary of infinite liberty ; but whilst we are climbing let no man cut one round out of the ladder ; every round is part of the trying, solemn, but most salutary discipline of life. When we have attained the fulness of Christ’s purpose, and are all shut up in the wedding chamber, eating and drinking with him from morning till night at the great festal board, then all our money will be sacred ; but just now some of us are obliged to put away into God’s basket God’s portion : we

are so thievish we should steal it if we did not seal it up on the Saturday : our fingers have got the felonious movement, and they would take that money if we did not seal up and stamp it as God's. Do not despise, therefore, the man who is yet in the narrow gospel of abstention and whose virtue consists in not being vicious. He has undertaken a great lesson : the pages are very long and the print is very small, and therefore it is not often that we have to turn over. The great question we have to put to ourselves is whether we have got hold of the right book, whether we are animated by the right spirit in its perusal. If so, we shall come to its *finis* then as great and perfected scholars, we shall lay hold of the great liberty and shall be enfranchised among those who have no need of candle, or sun, or moon, for the light is from God, and it needs no intermediate atmosphere through which to come to us. That is our resting point : it is afar off, we are on the road, faint yet pursuing—in that pursuit find your rest and hope.

If the disciples of John put a little question, Jesus gave a great reply. He was not answering them only, he was answering the spirit of all coming time. Herein you have the reason why sometimes a great answer was given to a small inquiry. The individuals who put the question spoke for themselves alone, expressed their momentary fretfulness or surprise, but Jesus Christ in every little question saw the enquiries that would fall upon his cause and kingdom through all time, and therefore he spread out his answer beyond the immediate occasion that elicited it. Hear this marvellous answer, struck from him in a moment. "Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. No man putteth a piece of new cloth into an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles, else the bottles break and the wine runneth out and the bottles perish, but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved." Christ's replies were all extemporaneous : never did he retire to consider any question that was put to him : the answer was plucked out of his eternity, it was always ready. If he could have paused for one moment he would have lost the crown of his deity. In the

instancy of his replies was the fulness of his light : you had but to touch him with right fingers and you drew from him the healing virtue.

What then is his own notion of our union with him? The figure is beautiful. We are children of the bride-chamber, and he is the bridegroom, and we are gathered around a wedding table, and the air vibrates and dances under the thrill and shock of the wedding bells. "Fasting?" saith he; "it is a stranger to a scene like this, it is an anti-climax, it is an alien that cannot speak the language of this fair land." We are not called to gloom and mourning and falling of the head, nor are we summoned to take the bulrush and sackcloth and ashes. My Father's house is a bride-chamber, the sanctuary is a place where the wedding guests assemble, the temple of the Lord is the place where the life-wine is poured out in rivers for the soul's ample drinking. Child, young one, spirit of delight and hope, you thought the church was a gloomy place: if there is any gloom in it, blame the human fingers that brought it to the place. The high ideal of the church is joy in its keenest accent, pleasure without alloy, the very ecstasy and rapture of gladness. Christianity—tell the world that her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace. When Zion is looking round and considering what key-note she shall take, say unto her, "Rejoice, rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!"

Yet the Lord keeps us on the right lines for one swift moment, quicker than the twinkling of an eye. In this passage he directs attention to the highest point of joy, and then he descends to the common average line of life, and says, "But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." Then they will base their ceremonies on reason, then the ceremonial observances of the church shall not be priestly tricks, for they shall come out of the heart's wound, out of the life's bitter grief; they shall not be calendared for punctual observance, according to the movements of the clock, but they shall express an inner, real, secret, profound, unutterable grief. When that black grief seizes thee, thou needest not turn to some man-written diary to know whether it is fast-day or not. Every heart will be its own calendar, every life will keep its own fasts, and no man needs ask the meaning of the dejection which shall then picture itself on the worn face. It shall bear so clearly the

autograph of the heart, that no man, wayfaring or foolish, can misread such writing.

There are those who ask questions about fasts and feasts and new moons and special days—mechanical scholars, mechanical Christians, technical purists, persons who need to go to ink-written paper to know what they have to do next. Is the bridegroom with you? If you can say "Yes," then eat and drink, yea eat and drink abundantly, and let your soul delight itself in fatness, whatever the calendar may say. Has the bridegroom gone—is his chair vacant—is his sunlike face no more the centre of the feast and the security of its delight? I need not exhort you to grief and mourning, the heart will know what to do: follow the intuitions of the heart in these matters, and then your ceremonies will not be tricks of the hand, but expressions of the inner life, your fasting and your feasting shall be accounted sacraments in Heaven.

Nor was the answer parabolically beautiful only, it was philosophically broad and true. No man putteth a piece of new cloth into an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. You are not to be partly one thing and partly another, the left hand is not to be a Jew and the right hand a Christian. That is not Christ's idea of his own purpose and his own kingdom. We are one thing only. There are those that are least in the kingdom of heaven, and there are those that are greatest; but they are all in the kingdom of heaven; and he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he that is greatest outside. You cannot be both Jew and Christian, both believer and unbeliever, both infidel and worshipper. You are the one or you are the other, and if you are trying to unite the two, then you will know by experience and loss that men who put new wine into old bottles lose both the bottles and the wine. What are you? Under whose banner do you come? Whose name do you bear? I ask not whether you are giants in the kingdom, but whether you are little children in the house, just breathing, crying, cooing, laughing, wondering, looking with eyes that are all wonder and but little vision. Let your hearts reply, and according to their answer let the exhortation come, for no other exhortation can touch the reality of the case.

Do not fast by rule, do not go to church because of mere custom,

do not read the Bible according to the measurement which you have laid out. If you are still in the state of pupilage which requires such mechanical help, far be it from me to deny you the advantage of such assistance. Some of you will need to say you will read so much Scripture to-day and to-morrow: if any of you have grown away from that mechanical arrangement, as I trust most of us have done, do not visit with severity of criticism your opinions upon those who have not attained your height of excellence. I cannot bind myself to read so many verses in the day, nor can I bind myself to fast on this day month. I must let the day bring its own religion, I must let the day deliver its own letters, I must let the day bring its own angels. I cannot forecast my religious doings and observances: to-morrow the bridegroom may have gone, and I shall not need you to tell me to fast: my head will sink, and in the chamber of the heart there will be a great vacancy and a fatal gloom. To-morrow he may come back, and this hand will thrust itself out to find the rope that rings the loudest bell. God make us all real, for reality is the glory of piety.

I am surprised that I find so good a stopping place in the seventeenth verse, yet the eighteenth verse opens in a way which constrains me to go on. "While he yet spake these things unto them——" Christ was a speaker that was often interrupted. Some of us meaner talkers cannot bear interruption; to be broken in upon is fatal to our lame speech, because we are not speakers, we are reciters or readers of a lesson, or performers of a trick. If we talked right out of the temple and sanctuary of our life, we could bear to have our speech punctuated by divers kinds of interruptions, and especially by those interruptions which called us to beneficent labour. "While he yet spake these things unto them," whilst there was wonder on the face of those who received the answer, whilst the air was still stirring with the vibrations of his sacred and revealing voice, whilst the question was yet under consideration, "behold there came a certain ruler and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead, but come and lay thy hand upon her and she shall live." We began with a little question, we come into a tragic prayer. Such, indeed, is the sharp transition of life. Now the great Teacher has to answer the technical inquiry, and now to recall the dead, and now to redeem the world.

The ruler's little child was twelve years old, and she was dead, yet he said, "Come and lay thy hand upon her and she shall live." "*Thy* hand—are not all hands alike? Is there a science of palmistry—are there those who read the man in the hand—are not all grips of the same intensity? Why say, "*Thy* hand"—could no other hand be found? We are sometimes shut up to the help of one man, even in our lower life. "O for our own doctor: his very voice would do the patient good. O for our own physician; he knows just what to give when the sufferer is in this crisis of agony. O for our old mother: there was healing, there was comfort in her gentle hand. O for the old father—if he had been here he would have found the key to open this gate. O for the old pastor that first showed us the light and brought us to prayer—he would know what to say to us just now." We have, therefore, analogy to help us in this matter. In the great crises of life there is often only one hand that can help us. Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power. The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. In thy hand is both honour and might. The good hand of my God be upon me. Out of whose hand do you take your daily food? Thou openest thine hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. Lay thine hand upon us even when we are dead, and we shall live again. Dear hand, wounded hand, mighty hand, hand of the Loving One, lay it upon us, before us, behind us, round about us—keep us in thine hand and let our names be written on its palm.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou art wonderful in healing : there is none so wounded that he cannot be cured by thy touch or by thy word. Thou canst even heal the broken heart, and bind up with many balms the wounded spirit, which no hand of man can touch. Behold thou art very kind, thy patience is more than the long-suffering of our mother, and thy care is beyond all the wisdom of our father's understanding. Yet thou hast given us our father and our mother, as helps to know somewhat of thee : they lead us up a little way towards thine own heart : like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. If men being evil know how to give good gifts unto their children, much more wilt thou give good gifts unto them that ask thee. A woman may forget her sucking child, that she have no compassion on the son of her womb, yet thou wilt not forget thy redeemed ones, and thy saints shall miss thee but for a small moment.

Thou hast written our names on the palms of thine hands, and thou hast written thy name upon our foreheads. We belong to one another, we are counted in the covenant, we are weighed in the scales that weigh the fine gold, and no speck of dust shall be lost. The foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. Help us all to be thine. In our rough way we are all thine, but so prodigal and wanton and wild, so rebellious and destructive and self-willed, slain by our obstinacy and utterly lost by the stubbornness of our unanswering hearts, though thou didst appeal to them by all the ministries of earth and heaven. Last of all thou didst send thy Son, saying, "They will reverence my Son," and we caught him and took him and slew him : we nailed him to the tree and pierced his side with a spear. Yet in his blood is salvation, in his death is sacrifice, in his offering is there all the power and grace of an infinite atonement, not to be known or set forth in words of man, but to be felt by the heart in its night of woe and in the keenness of its mortal pain. Bring us all to the cross, may it be our home, our refuge, our rest. Other refuge have we none.

Let thy word be very sweet to us, sweeter than honey, yea sweeter than the honeycomb—a new sweetness all its own, without answer or parallel among all the sweetnesses of the garden. We bless thee that we have begun wisdom : the fear of the Lord is that holy beginning. We have not learned much : have pity upon us and spare us that we may add little to little as the days fly away. Gold cannot buy it, it is not in silver to compass the price thereof ; it is the wonder of the deep, and destruction and death have only heard the fame thereof. All corals and rubies are not to be named with it. Help us to grow in wisdom, may we be wise in intelligence and wise in love, may our whole life be as a flame of wisdom.

Pity us in our daily distresses, and help us in our daily burdens : speak comfortably to those who this day feel the coldness and loneliness of a great bereavement. Bind up the heart in which there is no more blood, speak to the life in which the hope has died, and in the house that is desolated with sevenfold night do thou set thine own candle.

The Lord keep us quiet and give us the joy of peace, the solemnity of the infinite assurance of our acceptance with the beloved. When we come to touch the holy bread and sacred wine that have in them the memory of the great life and death may our lips be touched as with a live coal from off the altar, that we may receive the same reverently and with thankfulness unfeigned. Amen.

Matthew ix. 18-26.

18. While he spake these things unto them, behold there came a certain ruler and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead, but come and lay thy hand upon her and she shall live.

19. And Jesus arose and followed him, and so did his disciples.

20. And, behold, a woman which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment :

21. For she said within herself, if I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

22. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort ; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

23. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,

24. He said unto them, Give place, for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.

25. But when the people were put forth, he went in and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.

26. And the fame thereof went abroad into all that land.

AFFLICTION IN THE HOUSE.

"**W**HILE he spake these things." We need not critically inquire whether any interval separated between what is written in the seventeenth verse and in the eighteenth. No doubt such an interval did occur, yet it would have been quite in accordance with the habit of the great Teacher and Sufferer if he had interrupted any speech in order to do good to a broken heart. It did not shock the writer when he wrote, "While he spake these things unto them." It did not occur to him that he was indicating a point of interruption, nor did it occur to him that he was violating any probability of the case. Christ himself was the one improbability, the one impossibility of human history, and therefore we must

not bring little rules and standards by which to measure anything that he did or said.

He was answering a question put to him by the disciples of John about fasting, and Matthew writes, "While he spake these things unto them," ere yet the answer was fully given, or whilst the last word was being uttered, or whilst he was in the act of pausing for some rejoinder either by way of comment or inquiry,—just then a great, solemn, heart-laden prayer burst upon his startled ear. "My daughter is now dead, but come and lay thy hand upon her and she shall live." Elijah taught us that other gods might be so busy that they could not hear the cry of their devotees; Elijah spoke so in irony and mockery, bitter and severe, telling us to cry louder, that our God was talking or pursuing; he told us that we got no answer because our voice was too low, that the god was on a journey or sleeping—nobody knew what he was doing; he must be called for by a louder and shriller cry. Jesus Christ was never so busy that he could not answer any question put to him, and in proportion as that question was acute, arising from the heart's sore distress and burning agony, would he interrupt even a miracle of a minor kind, to accomplish a miracle of a superior kind. These are the things that prove his quality, these are the elements which, being brought together into one complete mass, establish his claim to be something more than I am. I go with him so far, and in a moment he shoots beyond me and stands alone on the solemn elevation. Up to a given line he is a good man simply, extremely kind and sensitive, answering every emotion of the life that is around him steadily and truly; then in a moment he leaves all examples and precedents and parallels behind, and stands before us as God, so much like God that were a man to say to him, "My Lord and my God," not a heart in all the listening assembly would feel the shock of an irreligious or painful surprise. The cry would accord with the circumstances, and would establish a sweet though pensive rhythm. The two words, the word of Christ and the acknowledging word of man, would form a balance to one another, and establish between them a consistency that would grow into an argument.

Yet he appears to be Servant as well as Master, for we read, "And Jesus arose and followed him," as if he had no alternative. He never has an alternative when the heart really wants him. It

is the heart that shuts him up to one reply. He can tell your intelligence to wait, he can rebuke your eager ingenuity or your impetuous fancy ; but when the broken heart needs him, if he were to delay, then it would be but to come with some richer blessing on the third day. Sometimes he does put off until the third day ; it is his favourite day, he typified it by instances in his life, he crowned it by his resurrectional return. "Come, let us return unto the Lord : he hath bruised us, and he will bind us up again : he hath torn us, and on the third day he will revive us." But he always answers the cry of the burdened and broken heart. He arises like a servant, and clothed with humility as with a garment, he walks after the man that wants him as a slave might go.

Yet you say you have never seen him and never known him. I can tell you why. You have had no trouble in your life. You have always sought him by the lamp of your intelligence ; you have always invited him into the cunningly arranged chambers of your fancy and imagination ; you have always endeavoured to tempt him by your intellectual curiosity. To all these Herods and Pilates he answers nothing. To this man will I look, the man whose eyes are upon the dust, whose accusing hand is upon his heart, and who sobs rather than says his eager prayer. You will send for him some day and he will come.

This is an instance of a man praying for *another* and yet praying for *himself* at the same time. "My daughter is even now dead." That is all we hear, but there was an unspoken prayer, for there was a subtle undertone, there was an aside in the action that touched the heart of Christ. If the child is dead, why call her back ? Who would call back a friend from summer to winter, from the land where the moon is as the sun, and the sun is bright seven times beyond himself, to the land of night and coldness and ice and bitter desolation ? He could have said, "Jairus, I congratulate thee : is she gone, is she at home, have the angels taken her ?

"Let the angels take her
In God's acre
Dust to dust
Must thou thus forsake her ?
Ay, thou must,
Will the stronger wrong her ?"

I bless thee : thy twelve-year-old child is an angel now."

But there was another prayer: not only was the little girl dead, but the living man was dead too. He answered the prayer not for the child's sake, but for the *man's* sake. The house was no longer worth going into, the house had become a ghastly tomb, the house had shaped itself into its ghost's faces, and miserable spectacles—Jesus went for the living man's sake. "When such friends part, 'tis the survivor dies;" so wondrous is the way of mercy, so subtle and incalculable are the methods and issues of divine providence, that sometimes they who are in heaven have to be called back again in order to make up our life, or we shall fall right down in the pit of despair, and our lamp shall go out in total and perpetual darkness. Selfish man—still not wholly selfish. If a man has lost one of his wings and cannot fly, he may surely ask to have it returned to him. If the lame man has lost his one crutch, surely God will not account it inexcusably selfish if he should ask to have it given back to him.

My daughter—in another place, my little daughter, my only daughter—is dead. Does death go into *great* houses? This man was governor, a ruler, a man of station and social influence. Does death go into the house of the ruler, into the dwelling of the magistrate, into the habitation of the judge, into the palace of the monarch? Is he not affrighted by the great gates gilded at their tops like pinnacles? He makes others fear, he knows no fear himself. Let us proceed with the narrative, for it is full of action. There is no rest in the outward life of this Christ: He has to cut out days and nights in which to rest, for the world's necessity would never allow him even to sleep. He had to create a Sabbath sometimes in the night that he might go to church and sing and pray. This portion of the chapter is full of action, it moves, it trembles with a strange energy, divine and human.

"And behold, a woman——" Yes, I will, and I know she will develop something in Christ that no man could ever touch. I will behold this woman; I have known Christ worsted by a woman; I have never known him beaten really in his own field but by a woman. He once told a woman that the meat was not for the dogs, and she said, "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table." And he could not stir one step from that spot till he had given a great "Yes" to her great prayer. Let us then in very deed behold this woman. She

has been diseased twelve years, which was exactly the age of the little girl that was dead. The little child had twelve years, let us hope, of joyous life and daily dreaming, much laughter, high glee ; and this poor woman, all the time, year by year through every one of the twelve, had been suffering much. No physician could treat her case successfully ; she had nothing bettered, but rather grew worse. She came behind him. There is a touch of modesty and a touch of something more than modesty and nearer divinity still—if there be aught nearer divinity than downright, healthy, real humbleness. She was going to entrap him, she was going to perpetrate what centuries afterwards was known as a pious fraud, she would steal a blessing. She had a speech in her heart—who has not ? You are going to face some difficulty to-morrow, and you have told your nearest friend what you will say, or you have kept it altogether in your heart, and turned it over and over with many an amendment. You will begin so, and continue thus, and then you will wait. What secret preparations we have, what speeches gotten by heart, what prayers stored up in the silent chambers, to come out some day and surprise heaven !

What would this good old mother say ? She said within herself, “If I may but touch his garment I shall be whole. I need not trouble him with any speech or with any form or ceremony of restoration, I am one that need not go to him in trouble—if I may but touch the hem of his garment, the dusty hem, the hem that is trailing on the ground. I need not ask to touch his dear hand, nor need I pray for that dear hand to be laid upon me. I will go behind him and watch the train of his dress as it goes along the ground, and if I can but touch it for a moment, I shall be whole.” That was faith, that was religion ! A soul that could burn with such spirituality must cure any body which it tenanted for a few frail years. Your bodies would be better if your souls were stronger.

Does Jesus Christ permit any theft ? Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, as no other eyes had ever looked upon her, he said, “*Daughter.*” We are all his daughters, we are all his sons, he is our Father and our Brother ; all relations in marvellous contradiction represent themselves in him, just as we put ourselves in relation to him. “*Daughter, take heart again, be happy : thy faith hath made thee whole.*” He asks no questions regarding

her disease, or the time of its continuance, or the peculiarity of its symptoms, or the keenness of its pain. He knows us altogether.

“He knows what sore temptations mean,
For he has felt the same.”

We have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, for in all points he was tempted, tried, searched, as we are, yet he kept sin at bay, and was conqueror always.

But how kind to make this little speech as well as to give the healing. A flower is all the better for having fragrance as well as beauty. How sweet to say something to her, to make a whole little speech to the woman herself! Sometimes he made the speech to the multitude: he said, “I say unto you I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” He took, so to speak, her little birthday book, which we give to our friends to write their names in, and he writes a little speech with his own dear hand, and it is all the woman’s own. “Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole.” He almost made the woman feel she had cured herself. He takes no glory—he needs none. He does not say, “Behold the virtue of my clothes, see what can be done by this oversoul that flows into the hem of my garment.” He tells the poor woman that she healed herself. He *loadeth* us with benefits!

And then these people came to Jesus, not because of their richness and health and strength, but because they wanted something of him, because of their helplessness and pain, or poverty of some kind. That is just what we do if we come to him in the right way. Sometimes you mock us, and when you see us going to church you say, “There go the good ones, there go the patterns of society, there go your pious ones. We poor creatures do not go to church or to the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper—we leave that for you patterns of high virtue and noble piety.” There is no sense in your mockery, you are altogether wrong in your conception, and therefore wholly unjust in your criticism. We come to Christ because we are *bad*. If you could say to us, “There go the bad ones,” you would speak with some justness. “There go the cripples, there go the helpless ones, there go those that cannot make up their own life and redeem their own soul, there go the paupers, the dependents, the helpless ones.” Say so and you

touch the reality of the case. I do not remain to partake of the sacred bread and wine because I am good, but because I am the chief of sinners. I never knew any man come really and truly to Christ who did not come because he was helpless, because he was suffering from mortal distress, because he was conscious of an emptiness and impotence of soul which nothing can touch but the divine hand of Christ.

Think of us, therefore, as *worse* than you. You can do without him, we cannot. You want to wait till you have washed yourselves and apparelled yourselves and made yourselves fit for his presence.

“All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him.”

Think of us as the worst men in society, the vilest, the meanest men, those who are utterly conscious of being self-helpless, and who want some one to rest on, and spare your bitter taunt and heartless mockery.

Now we resume the story that was interrupted by this woman, and beautifully interrupted. Such parentheses are the very glory and blossom of the history. It would be poorer history but for these interruptions. Jesus Christ does a great deal of good *on the way* towards doing some other good. He preaches as he is walking down to the church. His very passing by the house of the people leaves a blessing behind it. He is as a flower carried through the quiet air that breathes its fragrant blessing, that all may receive it and be made glad. This is an aside in his ministry which does not lie on the direct line as part of one continual purpose: it is something that happened intermediately.

Now he comes to the ruler's house. "When he saw the minstrels"—for heathenism had made some incursion even into Jewish habits—"when he saw the minstrels and the people making a noise (an artificial noise; hired mourners made to create a sensation), he said unto them, Give place, for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth." Thus he would always reduce his own miracles. He did not say, "She is sevenfold dead;" he always made light of his miracles; he said, "It is only the death swoon, she is asleep;" and they laughed him to scorn. They knew better—so did he, if it came to a merely literal interpretation; but he includes death itself in sleep. So he will strip

death itself of all its terrors and stings, and make it at last into a child's slumber. They laughed him to scorn—they had seen a thousand children dead, and they knew that this child was as dead as any child that had ever been buried in rock or in pit.

"And when the people were put forth, he went in." I see his stoop as he passes under the door and takes her by the hand. She could not touch him, and therefore he touched her. He will have it either way, only the *touch* must take place. He does not care whether it be your touch or his touch, but the hands must meet, the lives must impinge, there must be a beneficent collision. The woman had strength enough to touch on the ground, as it trailed along, the hem of the mean garment; the little girl lay there stiff and cold, and motionless, she could do nothing; he therefore did it all. "He took her by the hand, and the maid arose."

These miracles must not be blotted out of human history. They set *mind* in its right place; they set the moral forces of creation in their true position; they will not let death have all its own rude, violent way in the world; they put life on the throne; they elevate soul above body, spirit above matter. That is the grand interpretation of the miracles, that mind is regal and matter slavish, servile, and wholly helpless under the dominion and beneficent regnancy of the soul. If you have been trying to reconcile the miracles with your little laws of nature and partial conceptions of the universe, no wonder that your heads are dizzy and in the whirl of scepticism; but if you see in these miracles types of the supremacy of mind, the royalty and divinity of spirit, the right relation of the universe to the King and Creator, then these difficulties become as the small dust in the balance, as a drop in the bucket. They are not to be accounted of. When you come into this spirit of high, loving, pure, sublime, and noble criticism, then all these miracles wrought by Jesus Christ will no longer be the surprises of such a history but the commonplaces of a life so divine.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, our words are too poor for thy praise : thou knowest what our hearts would give if they could, thou dost accept the purpose as a temple and the intention as a great reality. Thou dost turn our water into wine, and our two mites of poverty thou dost account more than the gold of the rich. Thou shalt calculate for us, we will no longer reckon for ourselves. Do thou fill our hearts with a desire to praise thee, and turn our whole life into a glad and industrious service, so that whilst the days linger, we may be found doing thy will upon earth, with all the purpose with which thou dost inspire our heart. Now and again we are lifted above the dust and cloud, up where no earth-wind blows, even to heaven's gate—there we see somewhat of the other light, compared with which the light of our sun is but a dim flame. Keep us there in all elevation of feeling and sacredness of desire appropriate to such nearness to thyself, and then as to our daily activity and service, help us to toil amongst men with Christ's own devotion, piteousness, and infinite charitableness of heart : may the morning find us busy, may the eventide find us seeking only honourable rest, may we be numbered amongst those servants who have the blessedness of being found waiting or working when their Lord comes !

We have brought our weekly hymn to thy house, loud and sweet, cheerful with a great gladness, bright with a heavenly hope. Thou hast done great things for us whereof we are glad : every night thou hast blessed us with the benediction of sleep, every morning thou hast sent the sunbeam to awaken us again to a sense of responsibility and to the engagement of service. All the week long thou hast beset us behind and before and laid thine hand upon us, thou hast sustained our hearts by the infinite comfortableness of thy grace ; we are here to-day a band of men whose hearts God has touched—our life would rise to thee like a flame seeking the skies, our whole purpose would be undivided in intensity and in love, and all the while we would be seeking to renew our strength by no trick or cunning of our own, but by diligently waiting for the Lord until it doth please him to appear.

Thou hast given us glad promises, thou hast sounded a trumpet amongst us ; yea, a silver trumpet, and every note of it is a note of hopefulness. Thou hast promised that the earth shall be better lighted, that the heavens shall be filled with a greater glory, that all human hearts shall unite in offering praise unto the living one, and that the Cross of Christ, bare, bleak tree, blighted by all the cold and bitterness of winter, shall bloom into a tree, the leaves of which shall be for the healing of the nations, and all nations shall gather themselves under its grateful shade. Pluck thou the prey from the hand of the enemy, reclaim the heritage of the heathen and make it as the garden of heaven. Clothe thy

ministers with power, touch their tongues anew with tuneful eloquence and make their hearts burn with all the love of Christ.

We come to thee through the dear Cross of one Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Mary, Son of Man, Son of God, the Man with the great heart, the Christ of Heaven, the Anointed of Eternity, the Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world. O, take it away soon, take it away altogether, shut it up in its appropriate hell, and burn it with unquenchable fire. Reign in us, thou Holy Spirit, rule us continually, give us new thoughts, new emotions, clothe our will as with the garment of obedience, bring us evermore into the attitude of worship and homage before the throne of light.

Comfort those who are bowed down, with the solaces of heaven. Touch the heart that is wounded and give a portion of sweetness to the life that has long been accustomed to the bitter cup. Lighten the burden of the heavy-laden, re-light the lamp of those whose hope is dying. Bless our friends who are in the sick-chamber, waiting for health, or tarrying till their immortality in heaven begins. Behold our loved ones on the sea, and give them safe outgoing or in-coming. Remember all those whom we love—on foreign shores, in colonial lands, and in distant countries—unite us all by the subtle and inviolable fellowship of Christian love, and may we, when all earthly separations are closed for ever, meet in the brotherhood of heaven! Amen.

Matthew ix. 27-31.

27. And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us.

28. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

29. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.

30. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.

31. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

THE WORLD THROUGH WHICH CHRIST PASSED.

WHAT a world our Lord Jesus Christ passed through! He was always surrounded by the deaf, the dumb, the blind, the poor, the broken-hearted, the weary, the hungry, and those that had no helper. Herein was the realization, and most vivid and happy fulfilment of prophecy: it was foretold of him that he was to be the Apostle to the meek, the captive, the broken-hearted, and the mourning. *Every man creates his own world.* You can find a tolerably comfortable world if you please. Shut yourself up in your own parlour, enjoy your own honey, warm yourself by your own fire, shut out safely all the cries of

distress that are ringing in the world, and you will come to the conclusion that life after all is tolerably happy and comfortable. There are men who do this. When they hear complaints, they say they are exaggerated; when their eye reluctantly alights upon the newspapers containing reports of human distress and poverty, they call such reports romances, or they blame the poor for their poverty, the sorrowing for their distress, and the lonely for their helplessness. Every man, let me repeat, creates the world through which he passes. There are some of us near whom no poor man would ever come, if he could help it; he would give us room enough on the broad highway. There are others who are always surrounded by crying, distressful, sad-hearted, grief-stricken folks, so that life is spent in a kind of multitudinous hospital. You can go through life comfortably if you like, or you can acquaint yourself with the world's woe and the world's bitter grief.

What a wonderful world Jesus Christ developed! You would not have known that there were so many sick folks in the town if he had not come. The oldest inhabitant was surprised by the distress, helplessness, and sadness of life hidden in the town in which he had lived full seventy years and more. When Jesus Christ entered into the town, all its distress was in a flutter of expectancy. When the Saviour came into any city, the blind heard his footfall, the deaf saw signs in the air that indicated the presence of the Beneficent One—all the sadness of the town moved itself in a new prayer, and tried with feeble trembling hand to relight its little lamp of hope.

How is it when you go into any circle, neighbourhood, or town? All its fashion dresses itself, every looking-glass in the neighbourhood is made to do hard duty; or all the letters or all the music of the town may be moved to expectation—but no cripple cares for your coming, no deaf man says, "To-day I shall hear," no blind man gets his sight through your coming. We create, I would say again and again, our own society. The priest goes to the other side when he sees the half-murdered man, the Levite follows his chief; the Samaritan lingers in that unroofed church that he may redeem a life from destruction, and in this way sing his morning psalm and breathe his daily prayer.

You think the world is not a bad place to live in, after all. You say you have found life tolerably comfortable; you think

that a great deal too much is made of the shady side of life. Who are you—what right have you to speak upon this subject? I could put my fingers in my ears and run through a crowd of people crying with pain, and say at the end of my running, "I heard nothing of it; everything was quiet when I passed through." We do not diminish the world's distress by shutting our window, brightening our fire, and drawing around us all the comforts of our own luxurious abode. The distress is still there, it is crying in the night wind, shuddering in the snow, praying to the black night.

Every preacher creates his own congregation. "Like priest, like people," is a proverb not without its application even in this sense. The congregation and the minister are one—in height, in the very shape of their head, in the breadth of their shoulders, in the tone of their mind, in their look, in their fire—they are one. There are men we could not hear; they are not *our* shepherds. There are other men whom we could hear always, because they are our kith and kin from before the foundation of the world. As truly as a man calls around him his own companions, acquaintance and friends, as truly as a minister makes his own congregation in due time, so true is it in the deeper and more tragical sense that every heart makes the world in which it lives. If we were more sympathetic, our doorstep would be crowded with those who need sympathy, but in proportion as we are severe, misanthropic, unsympathetic, unrighteous in judgment, shall we drive away the world's distress from our neighbourhood and sight, and shall come to believe in the long run that the distress we do not see therefore does not exist.

We sicken at the sight of all this sorrow which is narrated in the holy gospels. Nearly every verse has in it something about the dumb possessed with devils, a man sick of the palsy, a little child dead, a poor woman stealing a blessing from the Physician as he goes down to raise the little one from her fatal slumber, a blind man crying and saying, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" a leper with his hand upon his lip, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." O, it is heart-rending! Who would not rather read a stirring novel about something that never did occur? When the multitude became hungry, the disciples said, "Send them away." That is our short and easy cure

for human malady—send it away. Jesus said, “No, never send anybody away that really needs your help.” Instead of sending them away, Jesus said, “Cause them to sit down on the green grass, and bring out of your little store all that you have, and do not let a single person go away until the last crumb is eaten,” and the last crumb is never eaten in the house of Christ; so long as he is at the table there is bread enough and to spare; so long as he spends your pound a week, working man, you will find in it no end of shillings; so long as he keeps your house, poor widow woman, there will be coal in the grate, there will be bread in the cupboard, and there will be oil in the cruse. “I have been young,” said the Psalmist, “and now am old, yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” We want a change, we are tired of seeing sad and tragical sights. I, for one, am often tired of the vision; I am weary, I long to plunge my eyes into the snows of the Alps, or into the deep greens of the rich valley pastures. It would do the eyes good. Jesus Christ never tired; he went about doing good. He tired every helper; he never exhausted his own sympathy.

Let us now hear the blind men. We have considered the leper's brief prayer, “Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean.” The blind men are quite as terse and as direct in their supplications. They cried and said, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on us!” How the right prayer rises from the heart when it is in its own proper mood. Let the *heart* grapple with the great problems of life and destiny. Snub your impertinent intellect when it undertakes to deal with the universe; let the *heart* have full swing. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” With the intellect he may believe unto temporary conviction; but with the heart he believes unto righteousness, completeness of sympathy, and reality and joyousness of religious obedience.

Wonderful is this way of putting the case on the part of the blind men. They said, “Have *mercy* on us!” The heart never said, “Be *just* to us;” the heart has no weights, and scales, and standards, and tapes of measurement. No broken-hearted sufferer ever came to Christ and said, “Be *just* to me.” That is a most remarkable circumstance in the development of human necessity and in the utterance of human want. The blind men might have

said, "We have heard that you have cured a *leper*; now be impartial in your administration of the affairs of the universe; deal with an equal hand; if you have cured *one man*, you ought to cure *another*; we will charge you with *partiality* if you do not cure us as you have cured the leper, and raised the ruler's dead child, and healed the woman who touched the hem of your garment. Be *just* to us." The cry is still for mercy. We must come to Christ not with claims but with prayers.

This reference to mercy is a *religious* reference. It goes back to the roots and causes of things. Blindness is a symptom—the disease is in the heart. Lameness, deafness, paralysis—these are accidents, attendant phenomena, mere symptoms of something within, and you may as well repair your roof in order to heal your sick child as you may attend to some outward symptom to heal the life. There is but one cure; the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin. You must be born again. The work is inward, vital, complete. Do not fret your energy and waste your time by attempting to deal with symptoms, but get to the root and cause of the fatal malady. Blindness is the symptom, sin is the disease; there is only one disease, and its bad name is—sin. When sin is destroyed, health will be re-established and sadness will vanish like the last night, taking with it all its blackness, and dampness, and misery.

Those men were not as blind as they looked. They were blind in the *body*, but their eyes *within* were bright as lamps, keen, piercing, far-seeing; they had the *vision of faith*. There is no other vision that will last a man's lifetime; that vision sees in the dark, sees through mountains, pierces the screen of night—it is the true vision. Those blind men had seen Christ a long time with the vision of their hearts. There is an unconscious preparation for great events; those great events seem to come to us suddenly, but in reality they are the culmination of long and subtle processes. One ought to have overheard them talking about the new man, the great Healer, the King of men. How they discussed together their manner of approach, what they would say to him, how they would bring the case under his notice, how they corrected one another as to their views and estimates of the yet unknown Healer, how Jesus Christ came suddenly—for he always comes suddenly, though he has been ten thousand ages on the way; when we

hear the crush of his chariot wheel, it will startle us like thunder at midnight. They went forward, and probably did not say one word of all they had prepared. The heart must be extemporaneous in its utterances, the heart cannot have its little piece of paper or string of parchment; a thousand preparations will be made for Christ, and yet when he does come the heart will answer him spontaneously, and there is a spontaneity that is better than the most elaborate preparation.

Now let us hear Christ himself upon the subject: "Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you." We find the vessel, he finds its heavenly contents. If we have no vessel, we cannot catch the rain; if we have no goblet of faith, we cannot catch the wine of grace. We must be co-operative in this matter; there is a human side as well as a side divine in all this great mystery of human healing and human growth. Jesus Christ, as we have often had occasion to point out, gave people the impression that they had cured themselves. I have never seen Jesus Christ put the crown upon genius, beauty, power, but I have been present on a thousand coronations, when he encircled the brows of modesty with the choicest garlands of heaven.

There is a great law here, which the Church would do well to ponder. It is the law which expresses the solemn and gracious fact that *our faith is the measure of our progress in divine things*. If the healing had not been wrought in the case of these blind men, the fault would have been with the men themselves. This is the true reading of our Saviour's word, namely, "According to your faith, be it unto you." If your faith is equal to the occasion, you shall have what you need; if your faith fall below the occasion, you will be as blind as ever. You may touch the right Christ, but if you touch him with a cold hand, you will receive nothing in return. Not only must we go to the right altar, we must go in the right spirit. The true spirit is shown in the conduct of the woman—"If I may but touch his garment I shall be whole." How is it that the Church is not succeeding to-day? Because the Church has intelligence, but not faith. How is it that the Church is empty to-day, and Christ forsaken? Because his Church has taken to argument, analysis, metaphysical disquisition, controversial statement, high and dry systematic divinity, and

has lost faith. Why is this the devil's carnival, why is this the saturnalia of the pit? Because we, as a Church, are clever, but not inspired. We have taken to reckoning religion, and laying a line upon it, and dividing it into fragments and sections; we have taken to a species of religious architecture, giving elevations, and side views, and sections, and detailed drawings, as if the Church were a trick in masonry instead of a glowing and living faith.

The Church will always go down in proportion as its faith declines. For God's sake do not be clever—have faith in God. Lord, increase our faith! If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye would say to this mountain, "Depart," and the mountain would, so to say, take to its feet and move off. We now have *theories* of inspiration, *theories* of the atonement, *theories* of justification by faith. Do you mean to tell me that Christ's great work for the human family requires a volume of five hundred pages to make it clear? Then is the salvation of the world impossible. The atonement is a flash of the mind, a passion of the heart, one transient glimpse of an infinite tragedy, one touch of hot heart-blood. It is not a five-hundred-page octavo in which theology perpetrates its miserable legerdemain, and creates night for the satisfaction of throwing up rockets in its face. Lord, increase our faith! take us away from the so-called fact-world, with its misnamed realities, and lead us into the invisible temple, the hidden sanctuary, the house in the clouds, and show us there thy grace; then send us down all the mountain steep to find the lunatic and heal him, the blind and give him sight, the deaf and give him hearing. The Church will one day take its cleverness up to some Moriah, draw its glittering knife and slay the enemy, and then the Church will put on her beautiful garments, and neither be ashamed of the mystery of faith nor of the obedience of love.

"And Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it." Mark the wisdom of this arrangement. Whatever is done to a mere individual, or to an individual merely as such, is not worth talking about. You have had your eyes opened; that is of no consequence to the universe; do not speak about that. Do not talk with a provincial accent; speak the universal language. If your heart has been blest, tell us; if your skin has been cleansed or your ears have been unstopped, keep the little news to yourself.

Jesus Christ was not a mere miracle-monger, Jesus Christ was not a creator of little anecdotes, Jesus Christ was himself the gospel. Jesus Christ never said about the *beatitudes*, "See that ye tell no man." When he said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven," he did not add, "See that ye tell no man." "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted—see that ye tell no man. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God—see that ye tell no man." Keep your individual romances to yourself; they are not worth talking about; if you have a *gospel*, go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Understand the difference between a miracle and a gospel, and you will understand how it was that Jesus Christ never cared about his miracles being talked about; but when he came to his gospel, the earth was too small a stage and time too mean a theatre in which to declare the infinite love and bid the universe hear. The gospel is the common speech of the race. Mere eye-opening or unstopping of the ear is a case that may occur here and there; the symptom is personal and the circumstances are narrow, but the healing of the heart is a matter in which the whole race is interested. The whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint. If you can find a man who can cleanse us and make us pure and happy, tell us his name. Talk of individual cases to individual sufferers, but speak the universal language to the universal heart.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thy word is like a great balm upon the wound of our life, full of comforting, give us the feeling of a new hope. Thou hast surely bruised the life of man at every point and given him to know the bitterness of great sorrow and the acuteness of intolerable pain ; thou hast followed such visitations with great grace, with consolations greater than the sorrows they would soothe ; as where sin aboundeth grace doth much more bound, so where our sorrow multiplies itself, thy solaces increase in number and their gentleness doth recover our hope. Thou hast made us as a pelican in the wilderness, as an owl in the desert, as a sparrow sitting alone upon the house-top, and then thou hast gathered us into great places, poured thy summer light upon us, and sent thy tender music through our drooping hearts, and with infinite plenteousness of rain hast thou refreshed the thirsty land, and with infinite light hast thou restored the comfort and the hope of man.

We have read thy word, and there is no music so inspiring and uplifting. We feel that we are one with the ages gone, that the saints of the early Church had experience which we reproduce, so that we are all one, and as our sorrow is one, so is the source of our healing and joy. Age after age comes to thee, each with its own cry, each with its own wound, and thou dost multiply thy comforts upon all time, and write the testimony of thy grace upon the rising and dying generations.

We have come each with his own song to-day. We sing of the blessings at home ; thou hast given us light there, and there thou hast set bread before us, morning, noon, and night. Thou hast protected and defended the household, and our family life to-day is a witness to thy superintending and gracious care. Hear us, then, as heads of houses, fathers and mothers, and households complete, when we sing of thy goodness and mercy and bless thee for our life at home. Thou hast watched us in all the daily commerce of life, in our buying and selling and getting gain, in our endeavours and our failures, in our enterprises and our successes—behold the whole is before thee ; what came not of thine inspiration do thou utterly destroy ; that which came of the motion of thine own Spirit thou wilt establish in imperishable integrity and honour.

Do thou grant unto us daily ministries from Heaven, so that we may know what is the good and acceptable way, so that we may have an increasing love for all that is true, beautiful, and divine, and so that our whole life may move upon an ascending line, never knowing the joy of contentment until that contentment is found in thyself. Give us strong grip of truth, give us a healthy and honest heart, loving the truth and pursuing that which is holy. As for our trials and difficulties, what are they but the shadow of the time through which

we pass? They have a meaning which we cannot read wholly just now; in the hurry and rush of our dying life we have but little time for the deeper and broader reading of life, but we will trust in the Living One—all things work together for good to them that love God. This shall be our anchor in the wild sea, this shall be our light in the time of darkness, and here shall we find our peace when the storm is strongest.

We commend one another to thy tender care. There are here broken hearts, men who are wounded in their very life, souls that can see nothing but great gloom, without a star to break its despairing night. There are those whose goblet is full of choice wine, whose life is a daily song, and whose continuance upon the earth is an unbroken health. According to our experience, whether it be this or that, let thy blessing come to every heart amongst us, and send none away untouched, unilluminated, unblest. Let all the people praise thee, yea, let all the people praise thee, with songs, feeble or loud, but all coming from the heart, because of thine infinite tenderness and thine immeasurable grace. Comfort the old with surprising light and joy, direct the young man whose purposes are set in the right direction, and give him favour in the sight of the people, that all his honourable plans and purposes may be consummated in a success which thou canst approve. Speak to those whose lives are rounds of monotony, always the same, always hoping, never realizing, always waiting, and never satisfied with the one answer that alone can bring content. The Lord show us the place of patience in our discipline, and help us to wait with the patience that shall itself be as a heroism in thy sight.

Hear any who have special praises to offer thee for life given and for life spared. The Lord hear such family praise and grant unto it confirmation day by day of renewed favour and support. Hear the praise of those who thank thee for returned friends, for absences brought to an end, and for fellowships re-united. Hear the hymn of those who would bless thee in fervent song for guidance and protection on land and water, at home and abroad, and who return to us this day to utter their praises in the common song.

The Lord go out after those who would not come with us, after the prodigal, wanton, wild, desperate man, a fool, a criminal, hard of heart—seek for him thyself, thou Shepherd of the heavens and the earth, for our feet are weary, and our eyes fail through searching. The Lord be with those who could not come with us, with the sick, the weak, the aged, those whose next sight will be thyself and whose next worship will be in heaven. The Lord hear every cry, and specially the cry for pardon which is uttered at the Saviour's cross—great cross, wondrous tree, altar of the one sacrifice, scene of the one shedding of blood that can alone touch the malady and the agony of life!

The Lord hear us, and His hearing shall itself be as an answer. Amen.

Matthew ix. 32-35.

32. As they went out, behold they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

33. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

34. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.

35. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

CHRIST MUST BE ACCOUNTED FOR.

YOU will find a fuller account of the same matter in the Gospel according to Mark, iii. 22 :—

And the Scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

And he called them unto him, and said unto them, in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan ?

And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

And if Satan rise up against himself and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

No man can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house.

Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme.

But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.

Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

You will see from these words that Christianity has to be *accounted for*. Men must have some opinion about its origin and about its inspiration, and concerning its whole scope and purpose. It is not, indeed, Christianity that has to be accounted for so much as it is Christ himself. There is a time in the life of every considerable man when his friends begin to wonder how he came to be what he is, and that which constitutes a common theme of inquiry amongst ourselves reaches its very highest point of intensity and significance in the case of Jesus Christ, the Son of Man. Do nothing in the world, and nobody will care who you are or whence you came. You will not be a figure, you will not be a force in society, you do not start any impulses that move other men, you throw no new lights upon the path of life, there never comes into your voice a startling tone ; nobody cares, therefore, who you are and whence you came, it is a point of concern to no one to account for you, simply because there is nothing to be accounted for. But challenge the thinking of the time, put truth in new phases and aspects before the intellect of the age, startle the world by challenging its ancient orthodoxies and its most

accredited traditions and prejudices, then perhaps people may begin to say, "Who are you? By what authority doest thou these things?"

These questions arose continually in connection with Jesus Christ. "Who is he? Is he not the son of Mary and of Joseph? Are not his brethren and his sisters with us? From whence hath this Man this wisdom and these mighty works? Whence do they come?" Thus Jesus became the problem of his age. He is the problem of all time; he is the secret and the terror of human history; he is the hope and the light of human prophecy, and to-day men wonder who he is; they reject his claims, and they call him back to ask him further questions. It is, therefore, not so much Christianity that has to be accounted for as Christ Himself, for in very deed Christ is Christianity, Christ is the gospel. This is a matter of personality, not of abstraction or of metaphysics.

Now there have been various accounts given of Christ, and we have one of these accounts in the text. Ask *worldliness* what it has to say about Christ and Christianity. The answer will be, "No doubt Christ is a very good man; probably a little fanatical in his methods, with very fine theories, and if they could be carried out it would be a good thing for the world, but we cannot carry them out, they are too fine-spun. No doubt he was a good man, and we have nothing to say against him;" and worldliness passes on, to add another window to its shop and another acre to its estates. Compliment is faint praise: there is no sting or viciousness in it; it is good so far as it goes.

Ask mere *intellectualism* to account for Christ. "A myth, a fable, a dream, a poem—not without fascination, often glittering in its sparks of happy suggestion, but a myth, a conception of the mind, a piece of beautiful patchwork. If we cared to go into its discrepancies we could upset the historic credibility of the whole, but we are content to say, a myth, and to pass on."

Ask *prejudice* to account for Christ and his work. The bad answer is in the text, "He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils."

Note the difference in those replies. Worldliness, engaged in its occupations, its brain in the whirl and rush of money-making and business and enterprise, says, "No doubt Jesus Christ was a very

good man ; we have no fault to find with him, but we have no time to go into all his claims and to settle his place in history." Cold intellectualism says, " Fable, fantasy, myth—very good in its way, nothing more." Prejudice, with low brow and muffled face, with a mien that indicates everything that can degrade human grandeur, says, " He casteth out devils by the prince of the devils. He is in league with Beelzebub, and learned in Satanic tricks."

Now observe, every one of those theories has its own peculiar difficulties. The worldly man finds a character in history that stands back from his policies and programmes, that says, " Labour not for the meat which perisheth. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth. Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Have your treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupteth, and where thieves do not break through nor steal ;" and worldliness can only say, " Very good ; a fine theory, but impracticable." Still, there stands a man that said these things and that lived them : he is not put down by a compliment, neither is he shattered by an assault. To-day his holy gospel lifts its sweet and serene voice amid all the tumult of conflicting teachings, and says, " Your life is *within* you : *be* rather than merely *have* : live in God—seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you ;" and worldliness with its little shallow compliment, does not account for, with any adequacy of explanation, the moral grandeur of the man who kept the world under his feet and his heart in the very heaven of God.

And the cold intellect leaves the Christ just where it found him. The intellectualist has to account for a man who was *dreamed* into being. Then the dreamer must himself be equal to the man he dreamed. You have to account for a man born in the imagination of some other man, and who, as a creature of imagination, has risen to the supreme place in human history, and who to-day rules innumerable millions of human lives and ministries and destinies. It is easy to call him and his work mythical, romantic, fabulous, but that does not account for the profound moral influence, the beneficent results, and the whole ministry that is represented by the term—Christ, or by the phrase—the Christian Church.

But what shall we say about the answer of prejudice? What

is prejudice—who can define it? How it spoils our life, how it takes the bloom off the finest fruits that grow in the garden of human fellowship. Once let prejudice occupy your mind, and the object of that prejudice can never be good, or seem good, or do good, or think good. He may do the noblest works ever done by human energy, but you will not allow him to be crowned because he has accomplished them; yea, he may serve you and your family night and day, but you will find the devil in his prayers, selfishness in his benevolence, and his very light shall be darkness, and all his meaning shall be a piece of self-idolatry. Beware of prejudice. We can answer an argument, we can rebut a charge, but who can find out the root and the issue of irrational and vicious prejudice? There are some men who never can do right in our estimation. They may be gifted with genius, their character may be above suspicion, and all their work may be of a high type, but we hate them, and therefore, when we are called upon to explain their influence or to account for their character, we are willing to accredit the devil with the whole rather than to speak one just word about the man we detest.

Beware of prejudice: it enters the mind very subtly, and once in the mind, it is the most difficult of all its occupants and rulers to dislodge. It is irrational, you cannot get hold of it, it has no centre, it acknowledges no court of appeal, it is invisible. It was from such prejudice that Jesus Christ suffered. When the Pharisees and the Scribes and the most religious men of the day heard the dumb speaking and were made aware that the deaf could hear and the lame could walk and could see all the good works done by Christ and his disciples, they were willing rather to praise the devil than to praise him.

See to what degradation prejudice may drag you; and we are all exposed to the influence of prejudice. Beware of it, it is the worst of the devils, it skulks, it sneaks, it watches in silence, it drops its poison into the cup when nobody is looking. It is the biggest of thieves, it is the most noted of liars, it is the most persistent of persecutors, and yet all the time it can cause those who are its subjects upon the largest scale to *disown* it. Have we not all heard men who were known to be all but filled with prejudice declare, with a serene innocence, that they were perfectly sure that they were not at all animated by prejudice? It is a horrible devil, it swears and

breaks its oath, it will kiss any Bible, and burn the book it kissed, and put the oath into the fire, that they may both go to the same hot ashes. Are there not some men you so bitterly dislike that they can do nothing good in your sight? It was from prejudice that Christ suffered.

Now I want to turn and to consider Christ's answer to this prejudice. The answer was *argumentative*. Having heard what the Scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself that kingdom cannot stand, and if a house be divided against itself that house cannot stand, and if Satan rise up against himself and be divided he cannot stand, but hath an end." That was an argumentative reply. Christianity has an argumentative answer to every assault. Christianity can fight for its position with any weapons that an enemy may choose. Did you ever know a case of the so-called *reductio ad absurdum* so complete as this? The Scribes thought they had answered the whole case by referring it to a diabolic origin. Jesus said, "How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself that kingdom cannot stand, and if a house be divided against itself that house cannot stand."

I ask you to look at that answer in the light of argument, and tell me if it could be improved in its logical construction and force. He confounded the enemy out of his own mouth. He took the sword from the enemy and thrust it into the enemy's own heart. That is what Christianity can always do. I have heard all the arguments that can be addressed against Christianity, and I have never heard one that could not be triumphantly answered and repelled. This is a specimen of the answers that can be given: it gleams with wit, it strikes like a spear, it burns like a fire. There is no reply possible to that argument. How can Satan cast out Satan? If Satan be divided against himself he cannot stand, if a house be divided against itself it cannot stand, if a man be divided against himself he cannot stand. Division is destruction.

Consider, therefore, that Jesus Christ's answer was, in the first place, distinctly and broadly argumentative. In the next place it was *judicial*. Jesus Christ did not stop at the argumentative;

having shown his adversaries how their logic limped, and how their accounting for his supremacy was not only a lie but an absurdity, he said, "Verily, assuredly, I say unto you, all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme, but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation," because they said, "He hath an unclean spirit." Christianity is something more than an argumentative contest. This is not a question of whether one point is fifty miles distant from another point, it is a question that involves moral issues, tremendous outgoings, it involves the whole question of personal and universal destiny. In the first part of his answer the tone of Christ was light, trenchant, bright, as became a merely argumentative retort. Suddenly that voice, bright as all the lights of heaven, sobered and broadened into thunder as he said, "This is the kind of sin that never can be forgiven." When you come with these Christian questions you do not come into an exercise of merely intellectual gymnastics; this is not a question of one man being cleverer than another in the use of mere words, it is not a clash of wooden swords, it is a question of life or death. The Scribes thought they had given an answer sufficient in its contemptuousness when they referred Christ and his miracles to the devil. They little knew all they were doing: they were writing on heaven's own scroll their own unpardonableness.

Take care how you treat the Bible, the altar, the Church. Words of contempt may easily rise to your lips, but they may mean more than you intend them to mean. You throw a little pebble into the broad lake: you thought it would go straight down and be seen no more. So far you may be right, but the circles are on the surface, and they vibrate and widen and multiply and make the whole lake throb, and who can tell what may come out of a contemptuous criticism of Jesus Christ and his ministry? Beware of clever blasphemers, of those little agile blasphemers who make atheism an easy trick in words, and get rid of the universe and its mysteries by the nod of an empty head. There are moral issues, there are judicial penalties, there are certain ungovernable recoils. A man has not done with his words merely when he has uttered them; they go away from him and are judged and sent back again upon his life, angels that bless him, or shadows

that turn his day into night. We have known this in countless instances. The men themselves have not always been able to explain the mystery; but find out men who are suffering in divers ways, not always to be set forth in express words, and it is not impossible, if you trace their history sufficiently back, but that you may find that these practical bitternesses, these black harvests, are the results of early blasphemies or profanities of the heart. Understand, therefore, that the blatant atheist who sells his atheism and pronounces its first little syllable with a vicious emphasis, does not always see or feel at the moment the result of his blasphemies.

Jesus Christ is not short-coming in the matter of his forgiveness, but there is a point at which his pardons are themselves shut out. Say he has an unclean spirit, and you extinguish the sun that makes every day and creates every summer, and having put out the fountain of light, there is no more brightness possible. Consider, therefore, that Jesus Christ's answer was, in the second place, strictly and solemnly judicial. That reply was more than either argumentative or judicial—it was, in the third place, *practical*. The proof of that you will find in the thirty-fifth verse. "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." That is the way to answer your enemies: keep on with your work; any fool can resign, it requires no genius and no heroism to give up the pulpit, or to withdraw from the Church, or to throw up what is called vulgarly "the whole thing." Jesus Christ did not do that; he was sometimes driven out, but he would not be driven out till the first great thunder drops of the storm were splashing on the pavement whose dust had rejected him. Then he said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not, but now your house is left unto you desolate," and a great hollow wind roared through the metropolitan streets, and great blotches of black rain fell from the thunderous clouds, and the lightnings looked from every point, and Jerusalem was being swallowed up. Blessed One—they told him that he was in league with the devil, and he answered them in witty argument, visited them with judicial penalty—and then went about doing good, went about all

the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. Let that always be your reply to every wicked assault. They said, "He hath a devil;" he went about teaching, preaching, and healing. Beneficent reply, sharper than wit, more intelligible than judgment. He made life, if possible, more a sacrifice than ever. And who am I that I should resign, when Jesus, my Saviour, might have resigned his care over me every day since I first knew him? I have wounded his right hand and his left, and both his feet, I have thrust a spear into his side, and crushed the thorns into his temples, and I have done it every day, and still he will not give me up. He lets the lifted thunder drop; he pursues me still. Who am I, then, that I because of some rude offence or incivility on the part of man, should run away from the altar and the work and the cross? I have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against any sin, or writhing under any insult. Let us, then, run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, scorning it with a divine heroism, and making it ashamed of itself.

So, then, we stand on rocky foundations. My house is not built upon a gilded cloud; I stand beside Christ, I love Christ, I know whom I have believed. He has been more insulted than any teacher; Pythagoras would have dismissed his school, Socrates would have run away from his mean pupils and vicious critics; this man never gave a lesson without having every word of it turned into a stone and thrown back into his own teeth, and still he teaches on. He was despised and rejected of men, but he shall one day be the desire of all nations. He was a root out of a dry ground, but one day he will be to the world as the Flower of Jesse and the Plant of Renown. He can wait. Falsehood is in a hurry; it may be at any moment detected and punished; truth is calm, serene, its judgment is on high, its King cometh out of the chambers of eternity.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, now that thou hast brought us to this our closing day, so that we shall be separated the one from the other for a while, we desire to look back with gratitude, and to bless thee with fervent hearts for all thy loving-kindness and thy tender mercy. To-day we set up our stone of memorial, and we write upon it "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." When the wind was cold and high, thou didst draw us very closely to thyself and screen us from the bitter blast ; when the hill was high and rugged, thou didst either break it down into dust and throw it upon the wind, or thou didst lead us up with ever increasing strength until its very ascent became a new inspiration. Through much land of beauty hast thou led us, through the cornfields on the Sabbath day, and we have plentifully plucked the ripe ears and have rubbed out the corn in our hands, and have eaten it and called it the bread of heaven ; yea, again and again hast thou called us to the wedding festival, and thyself hast broken the bread for us and poured out the wine that refreshed our hearts. Wondrous even to the point of miracle, an infinite surprise, has been thy patience, thy care, thy resource ; as for thy grace, no hymn of ours is sweet enough to touch the ineffable theme. We unite now, as teacher, as taught, as pastor and people, and in all the various relations we sustain to one another, in blessing thee for the year which closes this day, and in commending one another to thy tender care during the separation immediately to ensue. Let this be the brightest of all the Sabbaths, let the benediction of this day sink deeply into every heart. As for the shadows, may they be driven away with a great light, and our whole temple-life be filled with thy presence and be resonant with thy praises.

Wherein we have been unkind or thoughtless towards one another, the Lord have pity upon us and altogether forgive every soul. Wherein we have thought one wrong thought or uttered one word lacking in nobleness and in the fire of a true charity, the Lord pity our infirmity and forgive our sin. Wherein we have studied thy word with clearness and insight and with all the power and appropriation of high and illumining sympathy, the Lord give us a keen memory of everything we have studied, and enable us to treasure the same in thoughtful hearts, and to repronounce it in noble and useful lives.

We commend one another day by day to thy care and blessing. Save us every one, may no wanderer be lost, may no hard heart maintain its obduracy until the very last, may the hammer of the Lord smite it with effect, may the most stubborn of souls offer the hospitality of its love to the redeeming Christ. For Christ we bless thee : he is our Lamb, our Sacrifice, our Priest, our All in All, beginning before the beginning, stretching his duration throughout all

eternity, the very origin and source and purpose of the everlasting. O bind us to Christ, cleanse us with his blood, fill us with his spirit, and make us all ministers of his, seen and felt afar like flames of fire.

Let this house be dear unto thee; thou wilt not neglect this as one of thy dwelling-places; here we have set up thine altar, and laid thy Book open wide before our eyes; here we have endeavoured to magnify thee in hymn, and psalm, and anthem, and in the word of exposition and doctrine of truth. O dwell here—keep thou the house, be thou the preacher, be thou thyself the Paraclete, and enable thy people who shall come hither from time to time to see more and more clearly this is none other than the house of God. As for our dwelling-places, we give them all to thee; thou only art King of men and Saviour of souls; make our habitations homes indeed, light thou the fire in the winter time and give thou the message to the flowers that grow richly around in the time of summer.

Bless the old man in his weakness, the little child in its opening dream, the busy man amid all his honourable industry, the patient woman and mother in all her domestic ministry; heal the sick, lead the blind by a way that they know not, bid the husbandman be of good heart when he cometh forth to cut the field and throw into its open heart the seed which shall bring forth the staff of life.

The Lord hear all our prayers: the Lord winnow them himself that the chaff may not be answered, but the wheat only; thus have us in thy holy keeping day by day till the little life wears itself quite out and becomes part of thine own eternity. The Lord comfort his people, the Lord's hand dry every tear from the eyes of sorrow, and the Lord's almightiness be placed at the disposal of those who have lost their strength and are feeling the pain of feebleness. Amen.

Matthew ix. 36-38.

36. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

37. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few:

38. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

CHRIST'S VIEW OF THE WORLD.

WHEN we read that he was moved with compassion, we feel that it did not require *much* to move the pity of such a heart. It was not moved now for the first time. Again and again as we come along the line of the sacred narrative we have seen his tears, we have heard the piteousness of many of his tones, and have been touched by the pathos of many of his deeds. The key-word of this divine life is—*Compassion*. If you do not seize

that word in its true meaning, the life of Jesus Christ will be to you little more than either a romantic surprise or a dead letter. It is not a life of genius, it is not a display of literary power, it is pre-eminently, yet inclusively, a life of love, a history of compassion, an exemplification of the tenderest aspects of the infinite mercy of God. Begin at that point and read the history in that light, and you will see the right proportion of things and their right colour, and you will hear their sweetest and richest music. Again and again, therefore, would I repeat, the master-word of this divine life is the sweet and all-inclusive word—COMPASSION.

Observe what the word means. It means "feeling *with*," "feeling *for*," sympathy, a right view of human want and human distress, and a taking upon oneself all the pain, the feebleness, the poverty, and the anguish of those who suffer most. He bare our sins, he carried our iniquities, and himself took our infirmities and sustained our afflictions. You have been reading the life of Christ as if he were one of twenty men, leaders of human thought; we have lectured upon him as if he belonged to a gallery of heroes. Therein have we done him injustice, and therein, too, have we done ourselves injustice, for we have not viewed the great occasion from the right standpoint; therefore have we missed its majesty, its perspective, its subtlest relations, and its deepest significances. He is not one of many, he is many in one. Therein is that singular utterance most true—he is All in All—multitudinous Man, as great a host as the throng on which he looked; they were detailed humanity, he was our totalised nature. He felt every pang, he responded to every emotion. He is not a priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, he knows us through and through, and he is every one of us, because he is the Son of Man.

"When he saw the multitudes." Let us lay the emphasis upon the last word for a moment, for it will enable us to seize a new meaning and occupy a novel standpoint. When he saw the multitudes he was moved with compassion; when we see the multitudes we are moved with *wonder* or with *admiration*. See if that be not so in matter as well as in humanity. When I see multitudinous matter, a mountain, I am moved with surprise, my wonder arises; I call attention to the infinite mass, and we stand before it with wide-open eyes, and the whole posture is one of amazement.

We are wonderstruck that the rubbish should be so infinite, for it is only rubbish—the greatest mountain in Europe; no man of you would care for any spadeful of it, no man would be touched by any ten feet of it, no man would go fifty yards to see twenty feet of it; it is when it multiplies itself, foot on foot, pile on pile, mile on mile, until it cools itself in snow, high up in the rarefied air—then we run excursion trains to look at it, then we build villas near it and gaze on it with admiration, then we write about it in the public journals; it acquires fame by its *vastness*, not by intrinsic and detailed value, but by hugeness, by what we should term, in relation to human throngs, multitudinousness.

Now when Jesus saw the multitudes he was not moved with wonder, which is a partial emotion, or with admiration, which is an incomplete and babyish feeling. He was moved with *compassion*, and therein He differed from every other observer of great things. We know what it is to look at great things ourselves. If you see *one soldier*, you care but little for the sight; you may point out the intensity of the colour which he displays, or the splendour of his metal, but one passing remark will suffice for that occasion. You see *an army*, and you are filled with wonder, admiration, delight; it brings to you a sense of power, grandeur, and grandeur never touches compassion, it seems rather to rebuke it. If I see a mighty throng of men, the very last feeling that would come into my heart as an observer would be a feeling of compassion. Multitudinousness means power, multitudinousness means greatness, resource, all kinds of energy, amplitude of strength. Who dare pity a multitude? It could overpower you, run you down, trample you to death—why *pity* it? Pity yourself, little creature, run away from the ever-multiplying throng that marches with the strength of an army and with the pomp of a nation.

Yet here is a man who looks upon a multitude and his heart is filled with pity. He did not say, "How great, what force, what wondrous resources of genius, and strength, and money, and power of every degree!" His heart filled with tears; he said, "It is a sad sight." If he could have taken any other view of the multitude he never would have been the Saviour of the world. There you see the meaning of his life: it touches you now. This must end in fainting or in sacrifice, must terminate in shrinking from the infinite task, or in heroic conquest in the infinite tragedy.

Those tears have great meaning, those larger emotions than any we have yet seen have a remote and infinite significance. If he had been touched with wonder only he would have failed, if he had been moved with admiration he would have lost his power; but, moved with compassion, he includes every other worthy emotion, and sets himself in a right relation to his task. Nothing but *compassion* will carry you through any tragedy in life; you cannot go through it merely for its own sake. The *hireling* will fall asleep over the sick child, but the *mother* will drive sleep away from her dwelling-place till she has rescued her little one from the power of the enemy, if it be within the scope of her endurance and skill to win so great a triumph. Her compassion keeps her awake, her love makes the night as the day, her pity stops the clock, so that she takes no note of time. Every other emotion grows dumb; wonder must sometimes close its eyes, admiration falls upon itself, sates its appetite and dies of the satiety, but compassion grows by what it feeds on, and is of the very nature of the love of God. He grows in the development of his compassion; he will succeed yet. Beaten back at a hundred points, he will yet win. He shall see of the travail of his soul, which is really but another word for compassion, and shall be satisfied.

It does us good to come into contact with a teacher who sees the whole of his case. We are cursed by partial views. We elect twelve men to judge a case that we may bring twelve different minds to bear upon it and a twelve-fold power to grasp it fully. We have to multiply ourselves when we would be great; Jesus Christ always saw the end from the beginning, the entire situation, took the comprehensive view, excluded no aspect of the case with which he had to heal. As judges, we are ruined by our partial cleverness; if we could see more we should feel more and do more.

Take a view of a Christian congregation. What lovelier sight can the earth present? Many men, women, children, gathered together in one house sanctified to the highest uses, sweet hymn, noble psalm, penetrating, triumphant anthem, rich and pathetic prayer, reading of the divine word, exposition of the holy mysteries, exhortation, explanation poured from a loving heart and from an eloquent tongue, the spirit of peace in the house—what nobler sight is there upon the earth? I look upon it, and say, "All is

well ; the old earth is renewing its youth, and all is bright in prospect." Am I right? I am as far wrong as I can well be within such limits ; I am deceived by appearances. I may be right as to the mere literal facts of the occasion, within the four walls of any Christian building ; I have only to look outside the window, and I see that in this great metropolis to-day the majority of men are not in the house of God, nor do they care for its worship and service. You have only to go off the broad thoroughfare, and look down certain passages and openings on the side ways, to see festering humanity, children that were never taught to clasp their little hands in prayer, houses in which there is no word of God, men imbruted, women stripped of their divinity, and the whole human name befouled, cursed, degraded into what is practically perdition. Jesus Christ would not take the view presented by any Christian congregation only, he would see the congregation within and the multitude without ; he would take in the whole situation, and seeing it, his tears would drop from our hymns, and great heart-breaking agony would mingle with our broadest and most hopeful prayers.

There are men who take partial views and come to partial and, therefore, erroneous conclusions about everything. There are those who seat themselves within some vernal enclosure or summer paradise, and say, with a foolish chuckle, that the earth is not so bad a place after all. They see a bed of blooming flowers, fiery-hued or gentle-tinted, and they hear birds in the branches twittering, trilling, singing, and making melody in their hearts, and they say the earth is a very lovely place, notwithstanding all the croakers say to the contrary. Now observe how they confound the partial term with the larger word. They see a *garden* and then speak of the *earth*, they see a bed of geraniums and then speak of the globe ; there is no balance in their sentences, their words do not correspond with one another at both ends of their declarations. The garden is beautiful, the flowers are lovely beyond all that it is possible for the colouring of human heart fully to represent. The painter paints the *form*, but he cannot touch the *fragrance*. We admire their poetical sympathy within given limits, but go beyond the garden wall, go into the rough streets, go into the desolate places, take in the wilderness, throw the line around the entirety, bring the whole elements within your

purview, and then say what it is. The angel sees it, and says, "Mourning and lamentation and woe." Jesus sees it and cannot cease his prayer, Jesus looks upon it and is moved with compassion. Do not shut yourselves within your churches and say, "All is well;" do not shut the garden door and rejoice upon the verdant lawn and under the drooping tree, and say, "This is paradise regained." See every point of beauty, be thankful for every mercy given to you of the divine providence, but always endeavour to take in not a roof but a sky, not a circumference drawn by human compasses, but a horizon that required the sweep of the divine arm to form it, and when you see the entire scene you will be moved with compassion.

"But when he saw the multitudes he was moved with compassion because they fainted"—literally because they were vexed, and disturbed, and fretted, and chafed—as sheep when the wolf comes into the fold. They hear his panting, they see his eye of fire and his pitiless teeth, and they hear him as he prowls and snuffs and throbs in his cruel desire and design. Jesus not only saw the *sheep*, he saw the *wolf*; he not only sees humanity, he sees the devil and his angels, he sees how we are vexed, fretted, torn, disturbed, frightened by ten thousand black spirits that darken the day, and through whose black wings the hot sun can scarcely dart one living beam. He sees men, devils, angels, earth, heaven, and whilst the whole thing sums itself up before his comprehensive and penetrating vision his eyes darken with tears.

He noted that the people were as sheep having no shepherd. This figure of shepherdliness is most beautiful. He himself had the shepherdly heart. He is called the Good Shepherd: he knows his sheep, and many sheep he has that are not of this fold. He lays down his life for the sheep. The hireling fleeth because he is a hireling and careth not for the sheep. All these figures by which Jesus represents himself are figures of tenderness, sympathy, sometimes of weakness, by way of accommodation to our human infirmities. He could blow the trumpet of thunder, and stand upon the platform of the wind and roar with the tempest blowing from every point of the compass in one fierce blast; but he sees that would overpower and affright them, so he speaks in a still small voice, thunder reduced to a whisper, and therefore not

an utterance of feebleness, but a sigh of suppressed and condensed power. He is the gentle Shepherd, the good Shepherd. He made himself of no reputation, he took up our forms of endearment and service and our whole nomenclature of fellowship, sympathy, and love, and he made his tabernacle in our little words, giving them infinite enlargement according to his own purpose and motive. Observe how he comes from the multitude to the shepherd, from the many to the one. It is possible to have one man who can rule and guide and bless a countless host. I am longing for that one Man; I would speak with him a long while. He would be my preacher, my teacher; he would understand me wholly, and would speak to me in great breadths of knowledge and sympathy, and if I had any bitter shameful tale to tell, I could tell him every word of it, and he would answer me in gospels and not in condemnation. Any wolf can bite, any bigot can judge and condemn, any little detestable Pharisee can sit upon the judgment-seat and pronounce upon men whose shoe-latchet he is not worthy to unloose. It takes the great Christ and the Christly heart to judge with large judgment. Show me a man that can take in the large view, who knows all the languages of the heart, all the emotions of the wondrous human spirit, and he shall teach me and shepherd me, and I will fall asleep upon his breast: I will ask no better environment on earth than his strong and tender arm. Save me from the bigot, the literalist, the sectarian, the mean soul, and if ye know where the shepherd is show me his dwelling-place, and he will make my heart bright and young with a new hope.

“Then saith he to his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, the labourers are few.” The figure changes. He has been speaking about a shepherd, and now he speaks about labourers. He has been speaking about a fold of sheep, and now he speaks about a harvest-field, and he speaks about both in the same breath. We are punctilious about the consistency of our figures; we dare not risk our reputation by the use of a mixed metaphor; no man dare utter these words as if they were his own. He would be heard of again, he would be laughed at by the last boy that left the school, he would be left by men who may have their weaknesses if you could only find them, but who could never by any

possibility perpetrate the unutterable crime of uttering a mixed metaphor.

Both the figures are right : never mind about their juxtaposition. The world is a great sheepfold and a great harvest-field : it is both ; it wants shepherds, wants labourers, wants compassion, wants attention. This is the great view of the great Christ ; he saw the whole occasion, and saw the figures that were appropriate to it. So we can come into the text when we please. If Jesus Christ had compassion on us, ought we not to have compassion on ourselves ? Is it a time for us to be flattering our heart and saying " It is all right " when Jesus Christ is crying great, bitter, hot tears ? If he is uneasy for us, even to the point of agony, is it a time for us to be lying on a soft couch and to be saying " All is well " ? I would rather take his view of my life than I would take my own.

And then, again, some of us are fit for bringing into the garner. I have come to seek you to-day as one of the labourers of God. You must not stand out there too long. Already you are golden, mellow, ripened corn, and we now want to take you into the garner—will you come ? This is a harvest that cannot be cut down against its own will, and garnered against its own consent. It is a great mystery, and the mystery is larger than the figure, the figure only helping us to a very partial treatment of the mystery. You are fifty years of age, and you have been out long enough ; you are seventy years of age, and we want to bring you into the garner this very morning. You have ripened and ripened ; there is a point after which you will rot and rot. With all the love of my heart—no love at all compared with the love of Christ—I would ask those of you who are yet outside the fold to hear the shepherd's voice bidding you come in, and ask those of you who are as mellow corn bowing your heads under the blessing of the summer breeze, or the autumnal wind, to allow yourselves to be garnered in the church and heart of God.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, all things are in thine hand : thou openest thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. We all gather around the table of the Lord, and that which thou dost give us we do gather, and nothing else. We live and move and have our being in thee, yea, when we sin, we turn against thee the souls thou didst create, and the energy thou dost continually inspire. Our blasphemy could not have been but for the power which thou hast given unto us. We are fearfully and wonderfully made : we bless thy name in one breath, and blaspheme thy providence in another. To-day we stand on the mountain top where the sunshine is cloudless and we are all but angels : to-morrow we are in the dark pit and our voice is loudest of all those that are lifted up against thee.

We come now with a psalm of adoration and a song of praise. Thy mercy has been tender, and thy kindness has been loving. Thou hast added one mercy to another, one kindness and love to another, until our whole life is filled with the tokens of thy providence and thy care, and there seems to be no room left for any other sign of thy love. And yet thou wilt find the room because thou hast found the love. Greater things than these shall we see, broader revelations than have yet gladdened our heavens shall flame upon us, and we shall be struck by their infinite lustre, and constrained to praise by all their beauteous light. Guide us into all truth, establish us in faith and in love, give unto us that divine and holy charity which sees further than genius can penetrate.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. We humbly pray thee in the name of the one Priest and Mediator work in us that pureness of heart which can read thy word with intelligence and see thy going in our life and amongst the nations, and hear thee in all the blessed movements of thy providence. Thou hast done wonderful things for us. Our gray hairs shall be venerable witnesses in the court, testifying to thy daily love and thy surprising power and grace, and our young voices shall lift themselves up in sweet melody to say that the Lord is good and the touch of his hand is a daily blessing. Yea, all men and women, the old and the young, and the sick and the strong, the busy and those who spend their lives in leisurely contemplation and wonder, shall conspire to bless thee in one testimony and in one undivided witness. Thou hast been with us in our going out and in our coming in, in our down-sitting and in our uprising, on the water and on the land, in the long night and in the bright day, on the hill and in the valley—thou hast never forsaken us, though we have often caught our hearts in the act of base truancy, for we have drawn from God and sought a shadow in which he dwelt not. The Lord hear

us when we cry for mercy and plead for pardon, and hear in our voice the intercession of his Son, in our desire the beating of Christ's own heart, and behold our poor prayers lifted up and ennobled and made prevalent by the blood of Jesus Christ alone.

Thou knowest what we want and what we need and what is best for us. The Lord have us day by day in his own hand, the Lord open the right door, show the right road, and put around our soul a defence of fire that shall burn the encroaching foe. The Lord's Word dwell in us with such infinite richness that we shall have an answer to every enemy and a solace under every stroke. Thou hast shown some of thy servants great and sore trouble, thou hast bruised their little power, and shaken down their ambitions to the dust, yea thou hast set thy foot upon them as if in scorn and condemnation. Yet there shall be a lifting up for such, for their souls be strong in the love of truth. Come, thou who hast the key of night, and canst open the darkness and shed light upon those who have sat long in trouble and in shadow. Thou hast given unto others great prosperity, so that one day is brighter than another and every succeeding week has added to the greatness of their store. Dost thou intend to curse them with prosperity and to fatten them as oxen for the slaughter? Teach them that thou givest them power to get wealth, and may their prosperity be consecrated to them and be so much added strength to the resources of thy kingdom upon the earth.

The Lord bless the little children amongst us : give them length of days and great delight in the land, quick eyes to see all the beauty and quick ears to hear all the music, and the sensitiveness of heart which shrinks from sin. The Lord sanctify our business and make it prosperous a thousand fold, if it be for our soul's health, or sweep it utterly away if poverty be the right road to heaven.

Comfort all that mourn, visit the sick in their solitude and pain, abolish death, overthrow the ancient visitor and drive him from his stronghold, and enable thy dying saints to say, "O death, where is thy sting?"

We bless thee for all general mercies, mercies in business and in the nation and in the world at large ; for the good tidings of the harvest we thank thee—grant that the harvest may be well gathered in and stored for the good of the land. God save the Queen, multiply her days manifold, and give her joy in every added year. Direct our leaders, teach our magistrates, guides, and leaders of all kinds, grant power to goodness and break the arm of evil, and suddenly come to thy temple, thou Son of God. Amen.

Matthew x. 1-4.

1. And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

2. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these ; The first (not in official primacy) Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother (who with John had been a disciple of the Baptist), James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother ;

3. Philip, and Bartholomew (generally supposed to be the same with Nathanael of Cana in Galilee), Thomas, and Matthew the publican ; James the son of Alphæus and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddæus ;

4. Simon the Canaanite (called Zelotes from having before his conversion belonged to a sect which eventually brought upon Jerusalem its destruction), and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

THE MISSIONARY CHARGE.

ALIGHT will be thrown upon the first verse of the tenth chapter by recalling the last verse of the ninth. "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." Is this sentimental? Does the Lord call men only to prayer, or has he some ulterior purpose? Does he encourage them by first asking them to pray, and then when they have prayed themselves into white heat of soul, does he name the practical purpose which he had in view at the beginning? Who could bear to hear all his destiny at once? Who would like to have his destiny thrust upon him with abruptness and suddenness, like the shock of an unexpected thunder-storm? Who would not rather be gently and gradually prepared? This is the infinite statesmanship of Christ. He tells the disciples to *pray* for labourers. A lame remedy, say you, for the tremendous disease. Wait awhile: when they have *prayed* well they shall *work* well. When they have prayed for labourers it shall be revealed to them that *they themselves* are the labourers! Revelations come to men in prayer; whilst they are praying about others, God suddenly says, "*You* are the men—GO." That is the solution of ten thousand Church difficulties. A rich man I have heard pray that God would be gracious to the poor, and when he was done I have said, "Answer your own prayer." So a man shall pray that the Church be revived, and God says, "Begin in your own heart." Others, again, are praying night and day that God would send forth labourers into his harvest, not knowing that God's plan is that when a man can pray most that labourers may be sent, he himself should herald the way and be the evangelist of heaven.

If this could be brought to bear upon us in all the compass of its meaning and in all the force of its moral purpose, we should have preachers enough, and great ones and astounding ones, and the question would run from camp to camp, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" Think of wise men, men of great capacity and considerable education, meeting together in solemn committee for the purpose of inquiring whether they cannot engage a number

of all but incapable persons at eighty pounds a year! I would that some stern, strong man could break in upon their ungodly seclusion, and tell them to rise and go *themselves* and preach this kingdom.

Wondrous is the wisdom of this carpenter's son. First, he is touched with compassion when he sees the multitudes; then he calls the attention of his disciples to the destitute condition of the innumerable throngs; then he says, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." He is now in his pathetic mood; his tones have a strange melting power in them; he adds, as he only could add, "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest;" and the men prayed, and as they prayed their faces shone, and strange impulses moved their strength; and when they had marked the culmination of their prayers, he called them to him and said, "Go ye." He bids us add the "Amen" to our own prayers, he bids us carry out our own purposes; when we have wrestled long and strongly at heaven's gate, he says, "Now you are ready; there is fire enough in you; go ye and tell all that I have told you freely ye have received, freely give." Thus light is cast upon the first verse of the tenth chapter by recalling the pathetic conclusion of the preceding chapter.

"When he had called unto him his twelve disciples." He was *always* calling these men. At first he called them and said to each, "Follow me." And then he called his twelve disciples again, and again he called unto him his twelve disciples—always calling, always creating, always shaping our manhood to new and noble uses, always enlarging the definition of our sphere and ennobling the destiny of our powers. The call of Christ is not once for all. It is a *daily* interview; the invitation to go nearer to him comes with every sunrise. We have never been so near to Jesus Christ that we cannot be nearer, and the nearer we get the softer is his voice. When we were away, far out on the barren sands, he called unto us as with the blast of a trumpet; then we became more familiar with him, got nearer and nearer to his heart, and he called us to come nearer still, and the nearer we got the less occasion was there for any vocal force on his part, till now he whispers his commands; he breathes upon us with infinitely subdued tenderness his will and purpose—so lowly, so sweetly, he

seems almost to be consulting us. The great royal voice that was strong as a command is still the same, though it has dropped into a lower key, and gives us the impression that we are being *consulted*! Strange if such a leader, with such a human ancestry, be but a creature of the dust!

What does he do when they come nearer to him? He gives them *power*. Can any man amend that arrangement? Call twelve men to duty, and you may but mock their weakness and throw them back upon the humiliating consciousness of their inefficiency; but Jesus Christ, when he called the twelve disciples to him, gave them *power*. Strange let me say over and over again, until the refrain itself becomes a kind of argument, that he who was only a peasant and a peasant's son should have had this compass of mind and this marvellous sweep of statesmanlike power of getting men together, organizing them, constituting them, investing them, and giving to them, as in great handfuls, the omnipotence of God!

Not only does he give the disciples power, he gives them *consolation*. This adds a new and beauteous feature to the whole arrangement. We sometimes say, not knowing what we are saying, that if we have a duty to perform the only thing we want is power to do it. That is a narrow and foolish view. Power may be bruised, wounded, baffled, disappointed: sheer, hard, iron strength is not enough; we need encouragement, consolation; we need such reminders of human history as shall embolden us to keep our spirits up, though the wind be high and cold, and all things seem to be set in daily antagonism against us. It is poor living when we are reduced to the dry consciousness of our mere power. When a man can say, "I have power to do this," and works according to his strength, he is tempted into a tone of self-sufficiency, and it may be occasionally a tone of social defiance. But when he knows that he not only has the power to do his duty, but that when he comes back to his Lord and Master, bruised and wounded and quite tired, he will be taken up into the Almighty heart and cheered, and nourished, and encouraged, and blest with the whole baptism of omnipotence; then the tone of defiance is taken out of his voice, and he goes out—if the figure be that of a bird, with duty as its body, power and encouragement as the wings with which it flies.

"He gave them power." There are *flood times* in the progress

of the mind ; times when men are transported beside and beyond themselves ; seasons when we feel equal to the whole occasion of life ; periods when we are conscious of such an accession of strength as makes work a pleasure and danger an inspiration. We are all conscious of such times in our life. We say, "Would that these hours would continue, and we should break the mountains in pieces with a threshing instrument of iron having teeth, and should scatter the broken dust upon the mocking wind." Grand hours these of inauguration and coronation, almost of apotheosis. We are lifted up into our deific state, and we set our feet upon all lower things and triumph over them with power not to be measured by human terms. Then we vehemently desire the battle, and are impatient because the trumpet blast that calls us to it is long delayed.

Sometimes God seems to dwell in us as in a tabernacle, which he has specially chosen, and his light gleams out of us to the destruction of all darkness. It is perhaps well that we have not the incessant consciousness of this power, for we might then come to think it was our own. The intermissions of such consciousness may be as much a blessing as is the consciousness itself. It does a man no harm to be speared in the side and to have blood and water let out, or to have the thorn-points crushed into his temples until the blood starts and his life becomes a great agony. These things have deep meanings ; their significance is not in the little letter ; these are not little rills that run upon the surface—they are waters that come up from the hidden rocks. Our weakness has its lesson as well as our strength—yea, sometimes we can say, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

"He gave them power." Yet he did not weaken himself. This is the test of original strength. If we have only the oil we have bought we may run short at an unlucky time, and the upshot may be that we are barred out when the bridegroom comes and constitutes his household. "The water that I shall give him," said Christ, "shall be in him a well of living, springing water, and he shall not know when the sun scorches up the streams of the earth. His shall be a perennial flow of divine water." If you have your sermon committed to your memory, and are repeating it like a parrot, and are afraid that you will forget the next paragraph, you are no preacher. If Christ has given you power, the

word shall be in you a living, springing water, and it shall flow forth for the refreshment and the cleansing of those who attend your ministry. Take no thought how or what ye shall say. Christianity is not a literary argument, a literary essay, or a forensic success according to human standards and canons; it is a voice that surprises the speaker himself as much as it ever can surprise the hearer, and the accents are taught for the moment and for the moment's uses.

To give power and yet to retain all you give is the mystery of *originality*. The only natural suggestions that we have of such power, and they, of course, fall infinitely short of the reality, are the sun and the sea. The sun is the same old light that shone upon Eden and warmed its flowers into colour and beauty, and to-day he shines, unshorn of a beam, always giving, never the less luminous. And the great sea takes into it all the rain clouds, and is not conscious of any accession of water, and allows the evaporation to go on continuously; and yet who can say that the sea has shrunk one hair's breadth? These poor emblems help us to understand what is meant by the ever-giving God, never impoverishing himself by what he bestows. Ask, and it shall be given you; bring with you great petitions; do not stint your prayer, for the word is, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Ye have not because ye ask not, or because ye ask amiss.

What has become of the Church's power? I cannot tell. It is partially, almost wholly, lost. The Church is now prudent, self-regarding, self-admiring, self-protecting, trimming her hedges, locking her gates, repairing her walls, talking much within her borders. Where is the old world-shaking power? So far gone down that men mockingly say, "Presently there will be no Church, or there will be a Church without an altar." O for a lamp enkindled by other than human hands! The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; the opportunities were never so broad and so grand as they are to-day; pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest, and whilst you are praying the revelation may be flashed upon your own mind that *you* have to conclude your prayer by going forth.

Observe *the kind of power* that Jesus Christ gave his disciples.

He gave them power against unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. It was, then, *a power to do good*. When did Jesus Christ send forth any man with a rod, and with a judgment fire, and with destructive force, concerning anything that had in it the least hopefulness of ever being rescued and saved? The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them; the bruised reed he will not break, the smoking flax he will not quench, the little child he will not reject, the creeping, crawling sinner, that waits till the dusk that he may grope his way in the darkness, shall not be turned aside as a coward, but shall be *looked* into a new man. If this was Christ's own purpose, it follows as a matter of consequence that the purpose of the Church must be akin to it. It was a beneficent power. Jesus Christ gave his disciples power to relieve human burdens, human distresses, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. He detests their presence; that there should be disease in the creatures he named, that his machinery should have gone wrong, that the joints and valves which he fashioned and connected should have got out of gear, that any creature which he made should say, "My head, my head," or "I am weak," or "I am in pain," or "I am in sorrow,"—it came not out of the compass of his counsel; an enemy hath done this. It is his wish that we should all be well, without headache, or heartache, or broken joint, or poisoned blood, or reeling brain; we should be strong, grand, massive, royal, and if we are otherwise an enemy hath done it, and he must be found and slain.

It was power, too, that could be *easily appreciated*. Everybody could test that kind of influence, and the Church must betake itself to this kind of work more and more. The Church should be a hospital, the Church should be a nursery, the Church should be a home of the destitute and a shelter for those who are cast out, the Church should have both hands filled with bread to deal to the hungry; when the Church ceases her more or less impotent and inconclusive *speculations*, and betakes herself to this beneficent ministry, the world will soon know that the Son of God has come in deed and in power.

Yet the ability which Jesus Christ gave to the twelve men was strictly *limited*. Men do not understand the whole of their ministry at once. We grow into conceptions of our power and our

duty ; we begin feebly, externally, we take upon ourselves in the strength of divine grace to fulfil the very smallest occasion, and being faithful in few things, we are afterwards made rulers of many things. Having kept one city well, we have ten cities handed over to our charge. Thou shalt see Rome also : thy ambition shall be satisfied, if thy work is well done inch by inch and day by day.

The twelve men were not sent forth with any great psychological purpose, to analyse the minds and souls of men and hold high discourse on things recondite and afar from their daily thinking. They were sent forth to do practical work, physical work, work that could be instantly appreciated even by the least enlightened minds. Let us begin where we can : if we cannot preach we can give, if we cannot give we may be able to instruct, if we cannot say much it may be given to our hand to express, in masonry unknown to other men, the sympathy of a fellow feeling.

“The twelve apostles are these.” Now look at their names—names that do not stand out in history : with one or two exceptions the most of the men named here were obscure. We cannot all have pedestals ; we may be apostles though we may not be famous. The whole twelve are named—but two or three have any fame that fills the world ; the last has an infamy that fills earth and hell ; he is always named *last*. There are some names we are *reluctant* to breathe, they are only forced out of us that we may make a literal completeness of a statement. And they were men who had no *other* power. Jesus Christ does not clothe with additional influence men who have already attained a certain height of celebrity and power. It is all his gift : they bring nothing to him, he gives them all. Shall I take my little lamp and say to him, “Lord, this is a lamp of my lighting, if thou canst add anything to it I shall be pleased” ? He will not hear me ; he must find the lamp, he must find the fire, he must renew the light ; I must live, and move, and have my being in him. He does not *supplement* me, he creates me.

Perhaps a misconception of this law may have something to do with our spiritual poverty and feebleness. We may have thought that God would eke out our respectability. It may have occurred to us that we may bring fine culture to heaven, and heaven may be

only too glad to accept it. O cursed profanity ! Yet I dare not say that some of us have not brought our scholarship, or culture, or outward polish, and have expected the Church to be only too thankful to accept such astounding respectability. We must be *creations*, not improvements ; we contribute nothing. " By the grace of God I am what I am " must be the humbling yet ennobling consciousness of every man who would do any real and lasting good in the world.

Thus we have spoken of the gift of power. To what intent the power was given will appear in our next reading. The gift was directly given by the Son of God. Can he be but a *man* who has such gifts to give ? He is more than a man to me ; he is my Lord and my God. He invokes no sacred name, he utters no incantation, he mutters from behind no veil of mystery. Seated there, in absolute littleness of simplicity, he conducts the investiture of twelve men with the almightiness of God, within the circle which he describes for their mission. From his own heart as from a quiver he draws the arrows which these men are to shoot. Who was he ? Why did not they give him power ? How came he to be the origin and fountain of this might ? How was it that he always *gave* and never received ?

How this power will be wielded we shall see by-and-by. Perhaps under its exercise the wilderness may blossom as the rose, and the sandy places may be green as the fertile meadow.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, our life is a continual cry unto thee ; thine ear is besieged with the prayers of men. We are for ever in want, our experience is a cry to be somewhat more than we already are. This is not discontent, this is the joy of being yet unsatisfied. Thou hast more grace to give, more light to shed, broader and grander revelations thou hast yet to disclose, and we feel the joyous pain of a hunger that is about to eat, and the welcome grateful fire of a thirst that may quench itself in the river of God. May we never be satisfied, may we never be dissatisfied, may we for ever be unsatisfied, yearning for more, longing to be more, and to do more, and to see more. Thus may our soul's life be a continual growth, an eternal expansion, a yearning after the infinite, receiving continual answers according to each day's necessity.

We bless thee for a book that is like a store of living seed : let it be planted deeply in the heart's ground, honest and well-prepared, and behold it will rise up in due time a golden harvest, too large for any storage room we have. May the word of Christ thus dwell in us richly, not in the seed only, not in the letter alone, but as a seed that is sown, as a letter that is understood and has grown in all its spiritual blossoming and fruitfulness, and may we thus, in a high and ever widening consciousness of thy presence, grow in grace. Leaving all narrowness and selfishness, all bigotry and exclusiveness, may we know that the end of the commandment is charity, and that we have nothing if we have not love—that whatsoever we may have in our head if our hearts be not large enough to encompass the world, we are trees twice dead and plucked up by the roots. Teach us this great lesson ; thy Church cannot learn it, thy Church is dead, thy Church has gone astray, we have lost our love, our charity is dead.

We pray thee to receive what we can give of humble praise for all thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses. Thou art always before us and right above us, far beyond our song as the light is far beyond the birds which sing in its lustre. Still we would be praising thee ; feeble and halting as our song is we cannot keep it back ; when we see thy mercy we must respond to it, when we feel the glow of thy love there must be an answer in our heart, and when speech fails us to set forth infinite fire in cold words, then do we take to singing and making melody in our hearts, the higher speech, the speech which thou dost understand.

We come before thee with every power bruised, with every promise neglected, with every commandment broken, feeble in our knees, and our hands hanging down in impotence, our heads bewildered, and our hearts divided. Behold us in this hospital—sick, wounded, diseased, blind, crippled, with nothing to show but our poverty, with nothing to declare but our sin and our penitence ;

and whilst we mourn our sin, come to us and show us that thy grace has more than provided for us, that the almightiness of God is in excess of the feebleness of man ; that where sin abounds grace doth much more abound ; that the blackness of our life shall be utterly taken away by the blood which cleanseth from all sin.

Thou knowest what we need. We are getting older—we would become better ; the days are flying—we would write some deeper thing upon them than we have yet inscribed ; our opportunities of usefulness are dwindling, and we would arise and work like men who see the sun is going down. The Lord help us in all high purpose, in all noble resolution. The Lord purify us with flames of fire from heaven, and baptise us every day with the Holy Ghost.

Enlarge us, for we are small ; kindle a great light in our intelligence, for we trim our lamp with our own fingers, and feed it with our own oil. O, that we might live in the sun, and stand in the very glory of God ! Amen.

Matthew x. 5-23.

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans (the Gentile inhabitants of the country between Judea and Galilee. The prohibition is taken off Acts xiii. 46) enter ye not :

6. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

7. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

8. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils ; freely ye have received, freely give.

9. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses.

10. Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves : for the workman is worthy of his meat.

11. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy ; and there abide till ye go thence.

12. And when ye come into an house, salute it.

13. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it ; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

14. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

15. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

16. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves : be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

17. But beware of men : for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues ;

18. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

19. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak ; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

20. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

21. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child ; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death,

22. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake : but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

23. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another : for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come.

THE USES OF INSPIRED POWER.

WE are now studying the charge which Jesus Christ gave to his twelve apostles or disciples, when he sent them upon their first missionary tour. In the charge we found three things—Power, Service, and Consolation. “Jesus Christ called unto him his twelve disciples and gave them—*power*.” To-day we have to look at the *uses* to which that power was to be put. Power is another name for duty ; the measure of power is the measure of obligation. It was never God's intention that you should take the power which he gave you and enfold it and lay it aside, to be merely kept in its first state—which indeed is impossible, for power that is not used declines and dies. This we know in our intellectual education, in all the exercises of life—the power which falls into desuetude soon becomes impotence. Whatever power we have, therefore, is meant to be used for the good of others. If we cannot work miracles, we have the power of eloquence, the power of money, the power of sympathy—we are clothed not with *less* power than that with which the early disciples were invested—it has *another aspect*, and in some sense it may be turned to other methods and uses, but essentially it is divine power, and it is meant to be expended for the good of the race. It is not a personal possession or a personal luxury only, it is meant for expenditure, for spreading over the largest possible surface, and for accomplishing the largest usefulness.

What is your power? You can speak a kind word, you can illuminate a dark mystery, you can soothingly touch some bitter distress of the heart, you can utter a hopeful word to the man who is in despair, you can sit down and listen sympathetically to the heart that has a long tale of wonder or of woe or of bitterness to tell. Find out what your particular personal power is, and understand that wherever power is given, duty is implied.

Jesus Christ always used his power beneficially. When all power was given to him in heaven and on earth, how did he

employ it? I know of no words more sublime in their moral pathos than the words which he used when he declared that all power was given unto him. He mentioned nothing about destruction. He made no reference to retaliation, he did not say, "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth, therefore gather mine enemies together that I may consume them with sudden fire." Pause and hear what he has to say, and tell me if ever logic was surprised into such sequences as in the case of his great speech. "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth—go ye *therefore*." You call the word *therefore* a logical word, you say it indicates a sequence, and unites what is coming with what is gone. Observe into what wondrous breadths this *therefore* expands itself. "Go ye *therefore* and teach." That is the true use of power—to *educate*, to *teach*, to communicate ideas, to build up a spiritual kingdom, to deliver men from darkness and error and narrowness, and to lift them up into a larger self-hood. Such is the purpose of Christianity, and whilst the Church holds her faith to that intent, whoever speaks against it but wastes his own breath.

Let us now hear what Jesus Christ says to his twelve disciples when he sends them forth. He says in verses nine and ten—"Provide neither gold nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves." That is the way to go missioning. That is the way to evangelize the world. He never amended that method, he never said a single word about outfits and guarantees and supports and home refuges in the case of foreign disappointments. It is the method that must be adopted *to-day* if Christian men are in earnest. Go to foreign lands with nothing—nothing but yourself and God. Do you want to be a missionary to barbarous lands—to savage people? Then go at once and tell no one about it. "But I cannot pay my passage." Then *work* it. Pull ropes, carry chains, keep fires—work it, or you do not mean to go. "But I must have time to buy an outfit." On what compulsion must you? You are not a missionary. If you had the fire of God burning in you and wanted to go to reclaim the moral wastes of the world, you would be off! You would not need to go and converse with your minister about it, and consult a number of elderly persons concerning it, and to go around certain circum-

locutionary paths to come to it—we would ask “Where is he?” And by-and-by the answer would come, that Christ had sent you forth, without scrip or purse, or shoes, or coats, or staves. The Church now goes respectably, well equipped—the Church now goes to taste the ill-smelling dish of heathenism, and if its nostril be offended by the flavour, it comes home.

That kind of energy, if energy it may be termed, will never conquer the world. If Christ has called you very closely to himself, and has told you to go and be a missionary, then go. The Norwegians are following in this matter the counsel and will of Christ. They went into India and said to the people with whom they came in contact: “We have come to teach you Christianity.” “Who sent you?” “Nobody.” “What have you to live upon?” “Nothing.” “How do you mean to live?” “We mean to do you all the good we can, and we are sure you will not let us starve.” “But if we have nothing?” “Then we will have nothing along with you.” There was no answer to that argument. The Norwegians meant it, sat down and did it. Now, my young friend, you who are talking about going to be a missionary, why do you not start off on your beneficent journey at once? You may be killed if you touch mechanism; the machinery of the Church is now so complicated that if you do not take care some crank or wheel will catch you, and in you will go, and you will never come out again.

This is exactly how Christ himself came. “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant.” Just what I told you now to do—take upon you the form of a sailor, work your passage out to the land you want to go to, and Christ will go along with you, and you shall not have gone much over the land till the Son of man be come. He comes in strange ways, in great broad lines, in swiftly expanding consciousness of his presence, by filling the mind with new brightness and the soul with new emotion, and lifting up the life to higher and diviner energies. It is not the case of sending men into Christian cities to speak to the Christian intelligence and the Christian luxury of the age. We are talking to the intelligence, and culture, and wealth, and social influence of the metropolis. That is not the case described in the text. We are men who profess to know the

truth and to love it, and we have established amongst ourselves constituted and permanent ministries of the truth. We must, therefore, not apply to ourselves passages, directions, methods, and schemes which were suggested in reference to nations that knew not that Jesus Christ had come.

Jesus Christ, therefore, appears before us as a man who undertakes a great work, upon conditions which cannot be disappointed. He wants only *meat*, and there is something in human nature that will not let the earnest man starve. The workman is worthy of his meat. Go where you will, earnest man, you shall have bread enough and to spare. Not, perhaps, to-day, but to-morrow you will have more than sufficient, and that you can keep for the day that is to follow, or give it away as you please. But you cannot show disinterestedness, the passion of enthusiasm, the divinity of absolute consecration, and be left to starve. There are always kind hearts, open houses, thoughtful minds, liberal hands; God has his elect everywhere—out of hell. Our care must be about the truth; God will take care about the bread. If Jesus Christ had set up a missionary scheme with most intricate, and complex, and expensive mechanism it would have come to nothing, but its conditions are so simple, so heroic, so grand and so perfectly exemplified in his own person, that they apply to all times, lands, climes, and social conditions, and national and world-wide necessities.

In sending men forth to their duty, Jesus Christ shows them clearly what they will certainly have to bear. He does not promise them a downy pillow, he does not promise them genteel society, he does not offer to them any social bribe; he says, "You will be like sheep in the midst of wolves, they will fall upon you, break your bones, suck your blood; ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake. The brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child, and children shall rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death, and ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." There is no mistaking the lot of the true Christian evangelist. He has a hard time of it. Goodness is always hateful to evil; the beasts that gather together in the night-time hate the light—you torment them if you turn a sudden blaze upon them, for they hasten and fly, and gnash their teeth, and display animosity and

resentment. Goodness can never establish itself anywhere without a battle. Do not suppose that you can lull the enemy to sleep and put up your house, and when you have roofed it, and completed it, and furnished it, can then tell him that it is beyond his strength. The establishment of goodness is a daily battle. You cannot take upon you a new habit without having to fight for every inch of ground you make; you cannot exert yourself to throw off slothfulness or any self-indulgence without having to fight for the end.

What is true in discipline is true in the educational and moral conquest of the world. In proportion as you are free and easy in your methods of going into any company, and taking its similitude and speaking its language, will you have an easy time of it, but if you have a grand programme, a rousing and elevating purpose, you will go as sheep among wolves. Do not imagine that goodness is peaceful. Goodness is controversial. They who "make a desert and call it peace" may never intermeddle with anything that affects the integrity and nobleness of society, and then say that they are living quiet and peaceable lives. Quiet lives they may be, but not peaceful. Peaceful—that is a resultant word, it combines many elements and many considerations, and reconciles into one sweet harmony forces which, taken separately, are among the most combatant energies of the universe. Goodness always sends a sword upon the earth, and kindles a fire, and divides families; sets the father against the child and the child against the father, and the brother against the brother, and kindles a great fire upon the earth. We have succeeded now in putting the fire out, and have come to the age of courteous civilities and tender regard for one another's evil habits. The old goodness, heaven's own angel, the Christ-goodness, fought every day, not with a blade of steel but with that keener blade of conviction, enthusiasm, sacrifice, that counted not its life dear unto itself that it might win the battle against evil, and darkness, and corruption.

One would have thought that in sending forth Goodness the angel would have been recognised at once and welcomed with broad and generous hospitality. This historical reception of goodness enables us to answer and destroy a fallacy which is common in modern reasoning. People say, "Show a beautiful

example, a beautiful God, a beautiful gospel, and there will be an answer of devotion and homage in every human heart." That has been proved to be false. The example is not enough; men are not saved by spectacles: we need something higher than a spectacular gospel. Men get used to beauty, and theirs is a familiarity which is followed by contempt. There are men amongst us who care nothing for the sunrise; there are men who could gabble in a sunset; there are persons who could chaffer and joke upon the great sea. Understand that surprising miracles of beauty are like surprising miracles of truth—men may become so accustomed to them as to let them pass by without recognition or homage.

Goodness has always had a hard time of it. In proportion as the Church becomes luxurious will the Church become feeble. In proportion as the Church says to the world, "Let us compromise this business and say nothing unpleasant to one another, but sit down and enjoy ourselves as far as we can," the Church has disestablished itself in the confidence and esteem of men, and has broken the trust and vow paid before God's heaven. A little persecution and difficulty would do the Church good. We have heard of some preachers who would be mighty speakers if they could only be contradicted in the middle of their discourse, but left to themselves they are inclined to maunder, and halt, and become feeble, and monotonous, and pointless. If an antagonist could arise in the congregation and say, "That is not true," such preachers would become different men, every energy a flame, and the whole voice a thunder sent down from heaven.

It is even so with the Church: we have it so much our own way now, the lines of demarcation are broken up, and the old points indicated by Christ of antagonism, and assault, and aggression are, if not utterly obliterated, so treated as to have lost their accent and their force. Only this morning I was reading the old story of Hannibal—one winter in Capua brought about a ruin which the snows of the Alps, the suns of Italy, the treachery of the Gauls, and the prowess of the Romans failed to accomplish. So long as he was a soldier only, stern in discipline, rigorous in his habits, devoted with indivisible strength to his duty, he feared nothing—the setting down of his foot was as a

battle half won ; but the blandishments and enfeeblements of luxurious Capua sucked the strength out of the giant and left him a common man. The Church has gone to Capua, the Church is wintering in luxurious places—the grand old Church that wrote human names high up above all other human scrolls, martyrs, heroes, leaders—she can now hardly write her name in common ink.

Jesus Christ told his disciples how to treat the cities and towns that rejected the message which they had to convey to them. "Whosoever shall not receive you nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city shake off the dust of your feet." They mistake Christ who suppose that he is soft, indifferent, easily imposed upon, and who can be treated contemptuously without feeling it. We read of the wrath of the Lamb, the fire of love, the indignation of grace—God's heart burning like an oven. Jesus Christ here founds his directions upon the grand and indestructible principle which lies at the very base, and forms the very strength, of all high educational purposes. What is that principle? It is that no man has the right to *reject* truth. He has the *power* to do it, but not the *right*. We have liberty to go to perdition, but not the right. You have no right to refuse a just idea, you have no right to shut yourself up in solitude and say, "I will not listen to the ministries of civilisation that are going on around me." It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in any day of judgment than for you if you adopt so unrighteous and ignoble a policy. No man has any right to refuse to read a book that will open his eyes and give him wider light than he has yet enjoyed. He may decline a *privilege*, he cannot thrust from him a *right* without incurring loss in himself and divine punishment from without. This is not arbitrary doctrine, this is no conception of any individual thinker ; all the history of our education and civil progress testifies to the same thing.

What new responsibility this throws upon us ! We have not the right to reject truth ; we have the right to examine our ministers ; we have the right to examine every spirit that comes to us and challenges our attention, we have a right to examine personal credentials and personal authorities, but where any *truth*

is established no man has a right to reject it, and if any man reject a truth, even unwittingly or unintentionally, he shall suffer loss; he himself shall be saved, but very narrowly. If I keep out any part of the sun that can really do my life good, I suffer loss in proportion to the sunlight which I exclude.

Jesus Christ, then, defined the service which his disciples are to perform. In our last address he clothed them with power; to-day he indicates the field of service, he will next come to us with his sweet consolations and encouragements; he will lower his voice into another key, and speak sweetly to the heart. We saw that it is not enough for a man to have power to do his duty; sheer, dry, hard strength is not enough. The man will come home disappointed; he will not see the result of his labours, and he may cry bitterly for his failure, and it is in that hour of darkness that Jesus Christ will draw him nearer than ever to his hospitable heart, and speak to him in tones of ineffable sweetness the infinite consolations which sustained his own strength when he trod the winepress alone.

One remark occurs to me which might have been made under our last discourse, but which might be made appropriately in any connection when speaking of Jesus Christ. In the last verse of the ninth chapter Jesus said, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." In the first verse of the tenth chapter we read that Jesus Christ gave his disciples power, and that he sent them forth with his gracious commands. The Lord of the harvest is to be prayed to that he would send forth labourers; Jesus Christ himself sends forth labourers—was *he* Lord of the harvest?

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou hast given unto every day its own light, and to this day of all the seven dost thou often give the brightest light of all. Sometimes thou dost make us glad by the mere power of the light that shines around us, for it touches our stony hearts into music and upon our eyes it sheds the brightness of a new hope. We come to thee this Sabbath day, with all the memories which make it the day blest of heaven and dear to earth. We have seen the Crucified One; we have seen the grave wherein he was laid; we were early at the place of sepulture, and behold he was not there, for he had risen, as all good men must rise, and all good causes that have been smitten and wounded and slain must come up again—and behold we have found him, and in his “All-hail” we have stood still to receive his blessing and to hear his instructions.

We have come to thine house to-day with expectations not easily fulfilled; we have heard of the wondrous things thou hast promised to them that love thee; we have been told that the riches of Christ are unsearchable, we have been given to understand that thy spirit only can reveal the heavenly things to souls prepared for the disclosure, and satisfy our expectation so as to create in it a new expectancy, a wider and brighter hope. Thus do thou satisfy us by always showing us that there is more to be done and more to be received; this satisfaction is the inspiration of our manhood, it is a benediction upon our growth, it lures us by many a gentle compulsion to still stronger endeavour and still more patient endurance and industry.

We bless thee for the corn we have reaped this week: thou hast granted unto the fields plentifulness of produce, and thou hast given our arm strength, and thou hast sharpened our sickle, and we have cut down the golden grain, and we rejoice in the abundance of the provision. Thou hast done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Thou hast filled us with the plenteousness of thine own grace, thou hast established us in a confidence that cannot be shaken, thou hast preserved unto us our friends—the old man by the fireside, the little child in the cradle, the busy man full of distress about his daily bread, the mother and the sister—we are all here, and behold our psalm is one of homage and adoration to heaven. We will bless the Lord with all musical instruments, we will call upon the very stones of the temple to join us in our loud Hallelujah, for thy mercy has been tender, thy kindness has been loving, thou hast kept our eyes from tears, our soul from death, our feet from falling.

The Lord anoint us every day from heaven as with a new baptism, rekindle every morning the fire upon the altar of our heart, give us increasing delight in the broadening revelations of thy truth, may we obey every indication from

heaven of the will and purpose of our Father. Help us to lose our life that we may find it, and save us from the delusion that if we would save our life we must find it of our own strength. The Lord help us to trust his law, to live upon his grace, to answer his calls, then shall there be in our hearts a great peace, and in our eyes a shining light.

Look upon us as we are bowed down here at thy throne. We have come, not to plead against thy law, but to confess that we have broken it. We have not brought our virtues for thy survey, but our vices for thy pardon. We do not boast of our strength, we are humbled by our weakness, and now with the outstretched love of our hearts we grasp the great cross, the cross of Christ, the one and only cross by which men can be saved.

Thou knowest what we are, what we need, what our single pain is, what is the story we dare not tell to human ears, what are the prayers for which there are no words, our heart-yearnings, our deep desires, our solitudes that are often expressed in sighing and in tears. All these things thou knowest—come to us through Jesus Christ thy Son, our Saviour, not according to the narrowness of our prayers, but according to the infinite fulness of thine own love. Amen.

Matthew x. 24-42.

24. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.

25. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

26. Fear them not therefore : for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed ; and hid, that shall not be known.

27. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light : and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.

28. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul : but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

29. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

30. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

32. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

33. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

34. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth : I came not to send peace, but a sword.

35. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

36. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

37. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me : and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

39. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

40. He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

41. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

42. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward.

CHRIST'S CONSOLATION FOR WORKERS.

LET me call your attention to an instructive fact. All these tender consolations were given *beforehand*. Jesus Christ did not wait until the disciples returned, bruised and shattered, and then gather them into his heart and heal them, as it were, with his sympathy and blood. Jesus Christ once said, "I will give the multitudes bread, *lest* they faint by the way." That text gave us a discourse upon the *preventive* ministry of Christ. He did not wait until the people had actually fainted, and then give them bread: he gave them bread to *prevent* the fainting. He hath prevented me with his lovingkindness—that is to say, he hath run before me to get ready for my weakness and hunger, and ere the blow has been struck the healing has been made ready.

I hold it to be a noteworthy fact that this comfort formed part of the *inspiration* of the disciples. The comfort was, so to say, part of the capital on which they had to live. If Jesus Christ had been sending forth men to add to the leprosy of the world, to strike thousands more of its inhabitants blind, and to deafen as many as possible, he could not have forewarned his disciples of greater dangers and distresses. "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." How are we to account for this issue? He gave them power against unclean spirits, and he sent the disciples forth to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease, and to preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," and then he added, with an abruptness which must receive some profound explanation, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." Where is the balance between the men and the fate? I repeat, had he sent forth his disciples to break up the world, to diminish its joys, to add to its distresses, he could hardly have painted a more tragical issue. He sent them forth on

a beneficent errand, and told them that they should be brought before governors and kings, be cast into prison, be called Beelzebub, and be forsaken and hated of all men for his name's sake. Herein once more is the statesmanship of that wondrous Peasant, and herein do I find his Godhead. Not in the small grammatical clevernesses of the Biblical exegete, but in these disclosures of his shrewdness, of his insight, the penetration that pierced everything, and saw essences and realities, and the vital parts and secrets of all things. Who but himself could have seen that the casting out of devils, the cleansing of lepers, the giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, and the preaching of the nearness of a new kingdom could have ended in scourgings and contempt, and hatred and death? But his forecast has been abundantly established by facts.

Jesus Christ knew that there are men who will never allow good to be done, if they can help it, by any method but their *own*. There are men who would rather see you damned than see you saved by irregular means. They would rather have you lost in what they would term an orthodox manner, than see you saved by a method which to them would seem to be heterodox or heretical. They would like their own little prophecies confirmed; they do not want their conceptions, low as a ceiling, heightened into a sky; they do not want their little conceptions of fellowship, narrow as the walls of a man-built house, widened out until they touch God's horizon.

This was the principle which Jesus Christ proceeded on in delivering his charge. He told his disciples they would everywhere meet the diabolical spirit of sectarianism; they were irregular, they were nomadic, they were persons who had not upon them the usual seal, they did not bear upon their arms the accustomed badge, and though they might have good in their heads, good in their hearts, good in every tone of their speech, they would be hated of all men. Let us beware of the sectarian spirit; it blinds us to the excellences that are beyond our little boundaries; let us say with Paul, "Some preach Christ in one way, some preach him in another; whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached. Therein," said the grand old prisoner, "do I rejoice; yea, and will rejoice." Is the Pauline spirit dead?

As we have read this chapter you must have been struck with the number of times the word *therefore* recurs. It would seem as if nearly every other verse was a statement of some logical sequence. There is a deep logical sequence in the fact, that as the *warning* was given beforehand, so the *consolation* was laid up in store. Jesus Christ set forth the whole case; he told his disciples what to expect alike from man and from God. And this is precisely what he tells every one of his followers to-day. Jesus Christ—regarding him now as nothing more than the greatest of statesmen—said to himself, “These poor little children (for they were little better) must be delivered from the peril of *surprise*. Things must not happen *suddenly* to immature minds. I must go before them, and give them the outline of the whole course. They must not come back when they have accomplished their journey, expressing any surprise at the greatness of the difficulty. When they do come back it must be with the surprise of joy.” To *that* surprise he sets no period. It is his plan that no man shall ever come back to Christ and say, “Thou didst not tell me half the peril, and thy description of the burning, cutting pain was understated.” No; he said, “Ye shall be brought up in the synagogues and scourged there, and the scourge shall cut your flesh and find the bone, and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my name’s sake, and ye shall be hated of all men.” This was not a Man who tempted a few disciples by vivid pictures highly coloured, and glowing promises. He told them they were going into a black tunnel, and at every step an enemy would endeavour to seize them, but he also said, “In the midst of that dark and terrible valley God’s revelations will flame upon you and many an angel will surprise you into sudden and ecstatic joy.” We know the future perfectly well. All its great broad lines are drawn in a manner which cannot be misunderstood—trouble and joy, tears and delights, the grave and the bright heaven are all before us—not in detail, indeed, for no man knows the hour of his death: it is enough for me that I know I must die; the day and the hour hath no man known—they are hidden in heaven.

Jesus Christ gives his disciples the infinite consolation of knowing that when they suffer the Master suffers along with them. “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant

above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" No blow falls upon you that does not also fall upon your Lord and Master. Your tears flow through his eyes. We have not an High Priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities: he knows what the force of temptation is, for he has felt its entire strain upon his own beating heart. It is something for the private soldier to know that he is fighting side by side with his General; there is something in such companionship that amounts almost to an inspiration. I suffer less when I suffer in certain society. The very pain that would distress me if I were in society that I hold in contempt lifts me up into a new strength when I endure it in association with men whose names are the inspiration of history and the hope of the world. What more could he have said than that "Whoever undervalues you undervalues me: the insult is not meant for you; it is meant for your Master. When they spit upon your face they mean to spit upon mine. They could despise you from a social point of view; from the point of view of rabbinical learning and culture they could hold you in ineffable contempt; but it is through you that they see me: when they scourge you it is upon my flesh that the thong falls"? If the men heard these words right they must have been ennobled for the occasion. In proportion to their love for their Master would be their joy in thinking that they should suffer anything in his name, and afterwards men went out of the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. That was the *heroic* age of the Church, when men lived in God, and represented the very sun of the divine image.

When we suffer *alone* we get no advantage out of the suffering—we must offend CHRIST; when we think we are suffering alone we go contrary to his whole teaching, for he says, "Whoso receiveth him I send receiveth me: whoso believeth on me, believeth not on me but on him that sent me. As my Father hath sent me even so I send you. He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God." This is the root out of which all consolation comes. We do not suffer alone; we have a fellow-sufferer. Whenever you are laughed at because of your Christianity, if it

be real, simple, true, noble, honest, and healthy, the laugh is at the *cross*. Whenever you suffer, which few men now do, for your faith's sake, it is not you that suffer—the Son of God is crucified afresh and put to an open shame. Let us take care lest we mistake this matter of suffering in Christ's stead. Sometimes we suffer for our errors and not for our truth, for our impertinence and not for our fidelity, for our selfishness and not for the divine breadth of our character-building. If, therefore, we suffer on our own account, I wonder not that the pain should be sharp and intolerable; but in so far as our character and spirit and action are right, and we suffer, it is not we that suffer only; it is the Son of God whose face is smitten and whose heart is bruised.

Jesus Christ goes even further than this, for he connects the whole mission of the Church expressly with the Father. It is *God* himself that suffers, and it is God that identifies himself with the whole purpose and issue of the Christian economy. When the disciples were speaking in their own defence, Jesus Christ told them, "It is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." "A sparrow," said Christ, "cannot fall to the ground without your Father." So the universe is one: no man can touch the truth without touching the whole kingdom of heaven; no man can injure a single truth without injuring the whole quantity called truth, for the truth is not a question of single filaments and threads, particles and details: the truth is one, indissoluble, and to touch it to the injury of any part of it is to touch it to the pain of its very heart.

The universe is one: some of us worship in one place and some in another: but to God there is no space that can be mapped out in separate localities. He filleth all in all. If you are not against him you are on his side. Therein have I sometimes endeavoured to teach men that though they be not nominally in Christ they may be under the inspiration of his Spirit. Men know not what they do even when they put the Son of God to shame. There is a forgiveness that may follow their blasphemy; there is in heaven a consideration for human ignorance, though that ignorance culminate in the tragedy of Gethsemane and Golgotha. Truth, let me say again and again, is one as the universe is one. There is nothing despicable or contemptible; the fall of the sparrow is watched, and the very hairs of your head are

all numbered. God putteth our tears in his bottle, and he writes our names in his book of life. Sacred universe, sensitive universe ; if I lift a hand I send a shudder to the stars.

So my whole thought and wish and purpose and prayer—what are these but so many vibrations that tell upon lines that do not come within my purview, and that stir influences which I can neither understand nor control ? So Jesus Christ identifies himself with his disciples, and identifies himself and his disciples with the Father that is in heaven. It is one Church, one life, one temple, and to touch it at any point is to cause an influence to be felt throughout the whole living faculty. These are not tiny solaces, these are not little plasters for little wounds : these great solaces are redemptions ; they enter the very secret place of the life ; they do not evaporate in the sun—they feed the very soul.

Another consolation you find in the words, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." There is where so many of us may fail : we endure a little while ; the seed springs up speedily, and because there is no deepness of earth soon withers away. This is not a question of enduring for a little time ; it is a question of enduring to the end. The end—who can tell when that shall come ? Life is full of endings—life is full of beginnings. Knowing how distressed we are by monotony God has taken care in the economy of the universe that there shall be little or none of it. So he has broken up our life into day and night, the beginning of the week and the end of the same, the day of birth, the day of marriage, the day of peculiar joy—so many beginnings are there to tempt us into new views and lure us into deeper resolutions and give us fresh chances in life, and yet all these beginnings and endings culminate in one supreme finality—no man can tell when it may be : my end may be this day. It is well we do not know when the final point comes into the literature of life.

"He that endureth to the end." Paul did. He said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course." Weary not in well doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not. Jesus Christ himself said, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And again he said, "It is finished." Take care lest you come almost to land, take care lest you be almost saved. The old Puritan divine, the Shakespeare of the pulpit of his day, wound up one of his grandest appeals to his people by saying,

"To be almost saved is to be altogether damned." Take care lest you be almost in possession, and yet fail of clasping within your glad hand that after which you have been aspiring. Let us endeavour to the last hour. To fail within sight of the prize, to perish within sight of land, to be able to hear the welcomes that ring from the shore, and yet not to land there—Oh, that is painful beyond realisation.

I shall never forget how, recently, we approached the city of our desire. The day before the rain had been continuous, and the mists afterwards very thick, and there was a sudden fear in the minds of men. Then came out the evening sun, and touched up all the sullen clouds into a very apocalypse of glory and beauty. I never saw such a sign in all the heavens, that are full of pictures to the eye that searches for them. We moved on through the water, and the day of landing came, and when persons saw their friends in the near distance, there was much signal giving and signal exchanging. One young boy came to me with his eyes alight and, to explain his joy, he said, "I see my father." I heard a lady say, "I see my brown-eyes." I heard another say, "I see my sister." Was it possible to fail just *then*—to fail within a few minutes of the landing-place—to be lost before hands were grasped in the reunion of grateful affection?

Take care: we are going towards the end, but we may not accomplish it; God give us strength to fulfil every mile of the road, and to fight the last battle, and to pluck the sting from the last enemy. It is the *end* that determines everything. The goodliest ship may go down in sight of port. Oh, may we—many of whose ships are not good, much tried, storm-beaten, creaking because of weakness—may we all be brought in, and so at last—

"O'er life's rough ocean driven,
May we rejoice, no wanderer lost,
Whole families in heaven!"

Ye did run well; who did hinder you? Are you going to give up now? Say, "By the grace of God we will continue in patient well-doing till we have accomplished our days upon the earth."

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, do thou now come to us, and, according to the necessity of our heart, grant thy blessing unto us—everyone. We are often weary and often are we disquieted by reason of the length and hardness of the road of life; but thou hast provided for us all that we need as we pass from mile to mile of the dreary sand. We look up unto thee with a look that is meant to be a cry, a prayer, an expectation, and we wait upon thee with a patience that is as sacred and dear as a precious hope. Thou dost not disappoint the eyes that look towards the hills whence all true help cometh. Thou dost surprise those who wait upon thee, but never with the littleness of thy replies, always with the depth and breadth and graciousness of thine infinite answers. Thou dost ask us to open our mouths wide and thou wilt fill them: thou dost evermore encourage us to bring large petitions to thee, for they who cry unto the Omnipotent for help cannot ask too much from the arm that is almighty.

Thy grace is very sweet—sweet as honey; yea, sweeter than the honeycomb; and the more the bitterness of our life, the sweeter the solaces of thy love. Enable us to receive thy promises in all the fulness of their meaning, in all their ineffable graciousness, and may no spirit of hesitation or scepticism interpose to hinder our enjoyment of the infinite inheritance of grace which thou has provided for thy children. We own that we often live in a cloud; many a time we are uncertain of our standing, our senses mislead the soul; we mistake things near for things great, and things in the hand we mistake as precious. Give us the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the true spirit of discernment, that we may look upon things not seen and eternal, and that by the power of an endless life we may triumph in conquest over all the temptations and besetments of time.

Every heart brings its own song, every life is as a censer swung around thine altar to-day, filled with the incense of a pure offering. The Lord hear every tribute of praise, the Lord himself receive our sacrifice as one that is well pleasing, and return upon us from his broad heavens all the light and grace we need.

If we speak of our sin our tongue shall cleave unto the roof of our mouth, and there shall be no more strength in our joints; we shall tremble and stagger and die before thee. Our sin is blacker than night, our iniquities are more in number than the sands upon the sea-shore, but we now listen to thy gospel, and it is adapted to all our iniquity. Thine is the gospel to the lost; thine is a cry to those who have gone astray; thy cross, O Man of Sorrows, the wounded of Gethsemane and the dying Man of Golgotha, is lifted up, not for error and infirmity and weakness, but for the sin of the world. We are sinners; we say

so with bowed heads ; we mix no words of defence with our confession ; we mourn and lament our iniquities ; nor do we seek to mitigate in thy sight the aggravation of our offences. The blood of Jesus Christ thy Son cleanseth from all sin : this is our eternal hope, this is our perpetual joy.

We desire to be led into all truth ; dispossess us of every evil spirit, slay utterly with thy sword of light every prejudice and everything in our nature that would hide from us the true shining of thy sun. Help us to love one another, to pity one another's weaknesses, and to magnify one another's virtues.

Where it is possible to clasp hands in the union of intelligent and sincere fellowship may every man eagerly embrace the opportunity of attesting the common brotherhood.

Help us in all the difficulties of life ; we will not ourselves meddle with them ; we wait the inspiring spirit ; we abide the all-illuminating light ; we will quiet ourselves in the peace of God. Visit our sick-chambers to-day, see the father or the mother languishing and dying, the little child bidding a premature farewell to the earth of which it knows nothing. Look upon the families in whose households there is a great shadow, a ghastly spectre, a noise without words to express its awful meaning.

The Lord save every man who is trying to be better and to do better ; the Lord send sweet gospels like singing angels into his heart, to cheer him and inspire him with immortal hope.

Lord help us every one ; our days are a handful, and they are counted for us by men who reckon numbers ; may we remember how small is the span of our life, how little and frail our tenure upon our present earthly existence ; and remembering all these things, and remembering too our all but infinite capacity for doing wrong, may we hasten to the cross, may we all be found at the cross may our home be at the cross, may the centre of our life be the cross, and God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ. Amen.

REVIEW OF THE WHOLE CHARGE.

Matthew x. (*continued*).

A GREAT missionary campaign was proposed : Jesus Christ himself proposed it. Now what was his idea of such a novel campaign ? This is the largest thing he has yet attempted, we may therefore naturally expect to gather from it some hint of his intellectual quality. How does he address himself to great undertakings ? What was his intellectual energy, what his moral tone, what his propagandist audacity ? How will he grip a great occasion ? In studying the Temptation we thought we could discover from his answers the quality of his character, as from the devil's questions we formed a deduction as to the devil's nature. Now from this great and luminous Charge, addressed to twelve men in view of a missionary campaign, it is possible we may be able to gather something further concerning the intellectual and

moral purpose of the Son of God. To this study I now invite you.

First of all, Jesus Christ sent forth his disciples *two and two*. That was a shrewd and gracious arrangement. He might have covered double the ground if he had sent them out one by one. It was not his purpose in the outset to cover much ground; he was more careful at the beginning about the men and the strength and utility of their service than about the mere acreage of surface which he was to cover. In due time he will lay his hand upon the whole world; but it is early morning now, the dawn is just beginning to make the eastern sky a little grey, and at the outset he says, "You must go out two and two. The lonely heart is soon discouraged; two are better than one, for if they fall one will lift up his fellow, but woe to him who is alone when he falleth." That was an ancient proverb: it was within the pen of Solomon to write that wise word, and it comes within the range of Jesus Christ's purpose to take up our little common proverbs and to give their religious applications and religious securities.

Not only did Jesus Christ send forth his disciples two and two, but each two made up something like one whole. It was as if he had put together hemispheres, and thus made a complete globe of character and service. Look at the names. Peter and Andrew. Peter, full of fire, daring, passion, enthusiasm, an impetuous man with a strange faculty of leaping and making beginnings of things without any certainty that he would ever continue them to their completion. Andrew—his very name is a character, his very name is a certificate. If he be other than a *man* he will be a living irony, for his name means—*man*, and he was manly in all his conceptions and movements. He was as one who broke up the way with a strong hammer. They will do well together, these two—probably they will not fall out by the way.

The next couple—James and John. James is elsewhere called a son of thunder—a great rousing, violent voice that came in shocks and claps and bursts, and John was idealistic, contemplative; his eyes often settled into a calm, dreamy wonder, and his whole face looking as if his eyes were fastened on God's great Eternity. There will be no occasion of difference between two

such men; they are well mated. This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.

The next couple—Simon Zelotes, Simon the zealot, Simon the hot coal, Simon the fervent man, all fire, clothed with zeal as with a garment, and Judas Iscariot, cold, calculating, shrewd, representing the secularistic, administrative, executive side of things. If any man could go with Judas, Simon is the man to accompany him; if Judas can be trusted in any company, it was well to bind him to the fire. If there is purification and disinfection to be had anywhere it is in the red flame—so potent is fire.

What think ye of Christ? He did not allow the men to go out two and two just as they pleased, but two and two as he pleased. He setteth the stars in their places; he fixeth the bounds of our habitation; there is a balance in his hand, and he goes into the detail of every economy he administers. The very hairs of your head are all numbered, and he who watches the night lamps of the heavens watches the small birds that fall upon the earth. We may repeat, therefore, that in this arrangement there was at once great shrewdness and great grace. Is it not a fact well attested amongst ourselves that some men ought never to be thrown into association with one another? Each of the men is good, but they ought never to have come into nominal *union*. They do not understand one another, they are out of sympathy and *rapprochement*, they cannot comprehend one another's purposes and impulses, they are, perhaps, too much alike to be agreeable the one to the other, or there may be something about their dissimilarity which does not admit of immediate reconciliation; there is a want of adaptation between the two, and yet the character of each may be excellent. Matches are made in heaven in the widest sense. God knows all about the law of harmonies and companionships, and he is the wise man who waits till the colleague is found in heaven. I ask you, therefore, in the beginning of this study, to estimate this arrangement as affording some illustration of the compass of mind which proposed this great missionary campaign.

The next point which is illustrative of the character of Christ is in the fact that he impoverished the disciples materially, and

enriched them to infinitude of redundance spiritually. Never was master so severe with servant as to all material possessions and equipments. Christ's charge was a process of stripping in the first instance. No man was to have two coats or two staves ; he was to take neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in his purse ; everything that could be taken from a man was stripped from him by the very hand that sent him forth. There was no encouragement on the material side ; no bribe, allurements, inducement, or promise was given on the side that was purely secular and worldly. And yet, on the other hand, as to the enrichment of the men, why, all heaven was placed at their disposal spiritually. They were to have inspiration, speech, comfort, at every point ; nothing was withheld from them that could give them solace and ennoblement and quietude and the positive triumph of security. He was a statesman, he took a view that was bounded only by horizons, his plan was a firmament. Our little plans are broken arcs of his great circle. We are indebted even for the little arcs we draw to the great circle which he described. Remember there was no missionary society when Jesus Christ uttered this charge ; there was nothing to go by ; there was no hint in any human mind of such a scheme as this. We must therefore divest ourselves of all the conceptions and prejudices which they have gathered throughout nineteen centuries, and set ourselves at the chronological point of Christ's planning and thinking, if we would rightly estimate his method of spreading a Christian gospel.

In the case of Christ, poverty was to become a kind of holiness. To have two coats was to break a vow, to have two staves was to be suspected of disloyalty, to have a look of having anything of your own was to be brought under the suspicion of distrust in God. Outward grandeur would have clashed with spiritual nobleness and aspiration. To make the case clearer upon that side, Jesus Christ not only stripped the disciples of everything in the form of an encumbrance, but he further depressed the materialistic side by telling them that they would have blows, taunts, insults, scourgings, hatred of all men for his name's sake. This was a tremendous depression of the material side, an infinite discouragement to Judas Iscariot. It is the same to-day.

What think ye of this Man? *We* move by making great promises, we inspire by bribing, we encourage by *enriching*, in a

material and physical sense. But Jesus Christ stripped every man of the twelve of everything that looked like encumbrance, or ornament, or personal security, and sent him forth with nothing but—*God*. His kingdom was not of this world, his masonry was not a building up with stone, his purpose was a great spiritual one, and evidently, from this very inception of his plan, he means the spirituality of his kingdom to be distinctly revealed to every eye. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, the kingdom of God is not a material success, the kingdom of heaven is within.

Then look, in the third place, at the kind of homage which he claimed. It was preposterous, if not divine. There was no other name for it than the name that describes its ridiculousness, if it was not a divine claim. Father and mother must go, sister and brother must be surrendered, houses and land must be abandoned, the world reduced to one pair of sandals and one stout staff. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. He that loveth sister or brother more than me is not worthy of me. Except a man hate his father and his mother in comparison with me, he is not worthy of me. He that taketh not up his cross daily is not worthy of me." He himself was the one inspiration of the disciples, his name the only name they knew or were called upon to breathe; this was the homage he demanded—no oath in mere words, no vow spoken into the vacant air, to be lost in its ample spaces, but direct, positive, complete surrender. I do not ask you to form any opinion of the homage itself at this moment, but to form your estimate of a man who, in ordering twelve men to do a work, says that if he is not supreme beyond father, mother, sister, brother, houses, land, any man who professes to do his work does it with hireling fingers, with a mercenary and dishonourable soul.

It was a bold claim, and it was most graphically expressed. This was not the way in which an *impostor* would have moved; he would have sought by guile, and promise, and bribe, by all the tricks known to imposture, to have endeared these men to the cause he wished to propagate. But the impostor has no cause which he wishes to propagate except the cause of *himself*. Jesus Christ had this great cause to propagate—the kingdom of heaven, as first seen in the cleansing of the lepers, the healing of

the sick, the blessing of the unblest, and the sending of a plentiful rain upon lives that were perishing with thirst.

There was another point in his charge that must reckon in the great argument, and that was the command to avoid all religious mystery, and monasticism, and jugglery, in founding the new kingdom. "What I tell you in darkness or in secrecy, face to face, in this private interview, that speak ye in light, and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." There are no little corners and monastic enclosures and priestly confessional boxes in this great kingdom of Christ. This is no branch of the black art, this is not a question of attainment in priestly mummerly and symbolic representation, and things that can be only penetrated and expounded by the initiated and the learned. This is our conception of the kingdom of heaven, and we believe it to be Christ's own, that the Book revealing it is open to everybody, that the Book can now be read in our mother tongue, and that every man is responsible to God directly for the use which he makes of that Book. Herein I rejoice to believe that we have the truth of God. You may know about it as much as I do, if you will attend to it with your whole soul, and study it with your whole affection. I do not believe in any ministerial *class*; there is no minister that knows more or needs know more than the plainest man in society, except it be by some speciality of intellectual gift, or by some opportunity of closer literal study; but as to all that is essential, substantial, vital, in the gospel, I would as lief you consulted the man who sweeps the floor of the church as consult me in my purely so-called "professional" capacity. I have no profession; if I have not a *vocation* then am I nothing in life. We are *all* ministers; some are speaking ministers, some giving ministers, some sick-visiting ministers, some quiet sympathetic ministers, but all the Lord's people are prophets, and we are only in the apostolic succession so long as we succeed to the apostolic *spirit* and to the apostolic *doctrine*.

The ministerial class must be put down and discouraged by the true spirit of Christian Protestantism. The ministerial class spirit may become the curse of Christendom. I would have everything done in the light; I would have what is called a "lay-man" preside at the Lord's Supper as certainly as I would have

any minister that ever was garbed in the official clothing of the Church. Go directly to your Bible and to every honest man you can meet, and get light from all quarters, and know ye that the Church does not represent some little secret trick, some art of spiritual conjuring, but is an infinite gospel of love, welcome, hospitality, to those that are lost.

He was no mean man who delivered this great Charge which we have thus from time to time read and studied. He was a grand man. There is no paltry idea within the whole compass of his Charge. There is no heel that can be wounded in this Achillean address ; every word is sublime, and the whole purpose is beneficent. I ask you to call this Man Saviour, Lord, King, Priest, and from this day to say you fall within the inspiration of his charge, and will be the soldiers of his cross. The Church is nothing to-day if she be not inspired. I will not listen to any toothless old Church that does but mumble a literal creed. The Church must lay her claim upon my attention by her *inspiration*, by her power to touch my heart's disease, my life's sharpest pain, my soul's bitterest accusation. Do not let us go forth with symbols and signs and fine traditions, and grandly outlined and highly elaborated faiths and creeds and professions ; but let the world feel that we have an answer to all its charges, a reply to all its inquiries—

“ A sovereign balm for every wound,
A cordial for its fears.”

Do not let us secrete ourselves in a corner, huddled together like sheep, afraid of a rolling thunder-storm, but let us be out everywhere inquiring, looking, testing, and offering our gospel. Let us translate it into every language ; let us take it into every society, some speaking it as a high philosophy, others breathing it as a gentle blessing, others loving it as a high promise and tender solace, and all displaying it with a chivalrous and useful consistency. Then shall the Church, though nineteen centuries old, be fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, art thou not known unto us as a strong tower? We run unto thee and are safe: thou dost shut the door and no hand can open it. Thou dost shed upon our life a warm blessing and it is not in the power of the enemy to cast a shadow upon it. All the houses thou hast built have praised thee, yea they have resounded with song: the house of Moses, the house of Aaron, the house of David, and our house, and all the houses which thine hand hath built will praise thee, because thy mercy endureth for ever. Thy law makes us afraid, it is as a burning fire amongst us, and oftentimes it scorches us by its fierce heat: we dare not touch it, we stand back and are afraid, for it is as the mountain that might not be touched under pain of death—but thy mercy is the light that is round about us, the life that is in our very heart, the spring and security of our best desires and our holiest love, the answer to our affrightening sin, and the lifter up of the burden which bruises us under its infinite weight. We come to thy mercy, we look to thy love, we call upon thy pity, we say it is because thy compassions fail not, that we are not consumed. Our song shall be of mercy and judgment. Thou hast done tenderly by us, and all thy way has been as a path of gentleness. Thou hast lifted us up when we were cast down, and when the darkness was great and cold, without relief or hope, thou didst shoot into it thy beams, and behold it fell away before the gracious assault.

Our life thou hast created, our life thou hast redeemed, our life thou hast blessed: thou hast sent thy Son Jesus Christ, our Saviour, to redeem our soul from destruction and to set up within us the kingdom of heaven. We have come with our household song, with our family recollections, with our personal thanksgivings, and blessings: we have said we would make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation. Thou hast done great things for us, whereof we are glad: thou hast beaten down the mountain that was too high for our feet to climb, thou hast found a bridge across the gulf we were afraid to look upon, thou hast brought together extremities that had no relationship within the compass of our power, and thou hast given us wells in the wilderness and flowers and fruits in sandy places. We bless thee, we magnify thee, we call for all instruments that can assist our soul to raise its loud laudation that we may worthily praise and laud thy holy name. May our hearts henceforth glow with true love to God, may our soul be a living sacrifice to him who is our one priest and only atonement.

Thou hast given life and thou hast spared life in the house. Thou hast blessed us in basket and in store, thou hast given us the ready answer in the time of difficulty and peril, thou hast given us favour in the sight of those who opposed us, thou hast plucked the sword from the hand of the enemy, and the

tooth from the wolf that pursued. We will therefore sing of thy mercy and will daily magnify thy tender grace.

Thou hast caused us to see the valley of the shadow of death. Some are to-day sitting by the side of their dead and wondering concerning the mysteries of this universe of thine, so dark, so troublous, so alarming. Do thou come out of the cloud, and speak comfortably to the hearts that trust thee, find companionship for the souls of those that are lonely, grant unto those whose lot to-day is bitterness, to feel that thou art reigning over all things, and hastening all tumults to final peace, and bringing the great darkness of things to a complete and happy end.

Help thy servants who are in the world all the week, fighting its battles, enduring its cross-winds, its vexations and disappointments, who see their schemes torn to pieces and their purposes cast down to the ground. Regard those to whom their children are an affliction by reason of their evil spirit and conduct. Save those who are given over to sighing for which there is no speech. The Lord look upon every one of us with a tender eye, touch every one of us with a healing hand. Bless these dear little children who are in the house, the house which to them is a mystery and for the time a burden, and in due course may they grow to have within them Christ, revealed in all his beauty and tender lustre.

The Lord forgive us wherein we have done wrong : our very breathing has been sinful : many a thought has been an offence to thee : our iniquities have abounded over our prayers : whilst the tears of contrition were in our eyes our hands have sought to repeat the evil deed. God be merciful unto us sinners, and wash us in the holy blood, which alone can cleanse from all sin. Wherein we have begrudged one another prosperity, wherein we have been envious, jealous, or filled with dishonourable and unworthy motive and purpose, the Lord come to us in all the fulness of his pardoning love. Wherein we have given way to fear and have served the devil, and have forgotten all thy deliverances, though they be written in thy book, the Lord have mercy upon us, pity us and forgive us. From this day forward may we live the better life, may our prayer be richer and nobler, may our service be healthier and truer, may our hand be put out to every good work with an earnest desire for its accomplishment.

Bless all whose purposes are healthy, honest, and true : lift up that which is bowed down, break not the bruised reed, speak comfortably unto Jerusalem, and say with thine own voice that her iniquity is pardoned. Thus may the heavens come down to the earth, and the earth be lifted up to the warm pure heavens, and thus may we see face to face, God and Christ, and those who have gone before. Amen.

Matthew xi. 1-19.

1. And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.

2. Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ (the only instance in Matthew in which this name occurs by itself), he sent two of his disciples,

3. And said unto him, Art thou he that should come (the Coming One), or do we look for another?

4. Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see :

5. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them (are evangelised).

6. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended (scandalised) in me.

7. And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

8. But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

9. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

10. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

11. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist : notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

12. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force (seize upon it).

13. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

14. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

15. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

16. But whereunto shall I liken this generation (of Jews)? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,

17. And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

18. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.

19. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children (recognised in all forms).

CHRIST'S ESTIMATE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

“AND it came to pass when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.” He sent out his disciples two and two. He himself goes out alone. Who could have gone with him? The two and two went out on terms of equality: there can be no equality with God! He gave the commandment, but he did not receive it: he delivered the charge, it was not delivered to him. He is always fountain and origin, source, beginning and spring—he was always alone; he longed that others might have been one with him, but it took his own prayer to bridge over the infinite discrepancy between himself and every other man.

He went forth to preach and to teach, and did not sit at home

for the purpose of receiving *reports* from those whom he had sent out himself. He did not say, "I have delegated the kingdom of heaven to twelve men, and I will take my ease until they return to tell me with what success it meets in the world." He had been the Master giving commandment and charge, and now he was himself the slave of slaves. He made himself of no reputation, he took upon him the form of a servant, and he went out to preach the gospel which he himself had been putting in charge of others. I would rather have heard the Master than the servant, I would have rather had one glance of him than have spent a lifetime in the sight of the twelve.

But this is not his way: he was with us visibly for a little while, and as a cloud received him out of our sight he said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The Almighty did not allow himself long incarnation amongst us: this was his infinite wisdom; it would never have done to have looked upon the fleshly form longer than men were permitted to do. These revelations are timed: God turns over the pages lovingly, not arbitrarily—he knows precisely when to take us out of one school and send us to another, and he who gives himself up lovingly to the guidance of God will remain in one Church until he is fit for the revelations and exhortations of some broader and nobler teacher. Yield yourselves to divine inspiration: keep down your impatience as you would keep down a wild beast, and rest peacefully, waitingly, patiently upon God.

There was a servant in prison: he had been in prison all the winter, he had heard the revels of the not distant court, and as the weary months dragged themselves over his life he began to wonder. The devil always takes advantage of us in our lower circumstances. He gets a man into a wilderness and tries to stab him, he drags him into a prison and tries to impoverish him of his faith. There is a good deal in *places*, there is a subtle mystery about atmospheric influences, there are points in space at which we can receive no temptation, and there are other points that seem to be fitted as the very battlefield of hell.

When John heard in the prison the works of Christ, he began to wonder. Consider John's position. He had actually pointed

out the Messiah, he had said, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Now he had been month after month in prison. Who can see far in a prison light—who can see much with dungeon walls for a horizon? What poetry is there in Herod's pit? What wonder if the dungeon were diapered with strange cross-lights and shadows, and if the place itself were vocal with unholy suggestion? Some persons want to make out that the doubting wonder began in the disciples of John, and not in John himself. I cannot read the text with that meaning. Possibly they may all have doubted, but the message was sent from John, the answer was returned to John, and the after discourse about John has a wondrous suggestiveness of love and tender shielding and ample defence which we must presently study.

Observe that John sent *directly* to Christ. He might have sent to the Scribes and Pharisees, he might have discussed the question at large with such disciples as were about him. It is in this way that we repeat our most mischievous errors. Men will not go to Christ himself and have out their doubts, suspicions, and wonders, as it were, face to face with him. That is where you have been getting wrong. It may be that you have been reading commentaries and annotations and dissertations about Christ—go to him immediately without interposition or mediatory influence of any kind, shut yourselves up with the four gospels, and with an honest heart study the Man. That is what you have to do. You have not done your duty when you have read a few verses or an occasional incident—you have done nothing until you have read the four gospels clear through, and have wrought their narrative and precepts into the very tissue of your mind. I never knew a man do that honestly, and reverently, who did not come out at the other end with a great love in his heart, with great tears in his eyes; and if he did not fall down and worship, he stood still and wondered, religiously. History records the case of men who sat down to disprove the Scriptures, and who, in order to qualify themselves for their disproof, honestly read them through, and then dipped their pens to write a vindication of the holy records. Go then immediately to Christ, make yourselves perfectly familiar with every word and title in the four gospels: do not dimly and vaguely refer to portions, parts, and aspects of those gospels, but have them in

you as a living word, easy of allusion, literal in your quotations, perfect in your recollections, and then say what you think of this Man. Come back with your answer, and let us know the sum total of your reasonings.

See how Jesus Christ treated this inquirer. He called attention to his works. "Go," said he, "and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor are evangelised." That was Christ's graphic answer; not metaphysical, not doctrinal, not a matter of opinion elaborately stated and eloquently discussed, but *facts*, palpable results, active and noble beneficence. A man's work should praise him; a man's life should be his vindication. You may be ruined by complimentary testimonials; you must be your own testimonial if you would vindicate your claim to any degree of authority and sacred influence in society. It is not what men say *about* you, but what you *do* yourselves, that must speak for you. Many men have come to me with testimonials which have nearly blinded me: they have been such great men that I could do nothing for them, and yet there they stood in form of paupers, seeking for something to be done. But the testimonials said they were so learned and so eloquent and so capable and so excellent, that I have thought they must have been testimonials meant to be presented at heaven's gate for admission into some higher sphere than this. Do not be overweighted with the complimentary testimonials of your flattering friends, but by your own energy, force, wisdom, love, sanctified and inspired from heaven, make such a mark that the doubter himself shall be asked to consider it and decide as to its value.

This is what the Church must do. The Church cannot live in its books of mere divinity. The Church can make no impression upon the age so long as it indulges in merely wordy controversy. What is the Church doing? Are the lepers being cleansed and the blind receiving their sight, are the deaf hearing, are the dumb speaking? This is the only proof the Church need supply for its divine inspiration and its divine authority. All this can be done to-day. We narrow Christ's meaning and evacuate it of all high significance when we imagine that to open the eyes of the blind is a merely physical operation, or to cleanse the leper a ministry

that begins and ends in the flesh. Those miracles were introductory, symbolic, wholly preparatory and suggestive. Christ says, "I am looking for greater works than these, which ye shall be called upon to do," and which he promised they should do when he went to the Father. The bad man is a leper, the man who is in intellectual error is the blind man, the man whose mouth is open to utter forbidden words is practically the dumb man in God's high sense of speech and music. When the Church works these miracles she need not defend her credentials, and write a great deal about her ancestry and her literature. Her answer is not in the *library* only, it is on the public thoroughfares, it is in the homes, lives, and businesses of men.

Why will you not bear witness for your Master in these matters? Why will you receive blessings in Church and be dumb about them? It is not so in any other Church than Christ's. If I go for a moment amongst those who are studying music, I hear no other subject referred to from the time of opening the conversation to the time of closing it. It is delightful to witness the enthusiasm of the student and the devotee. Is there any shame about them? Not a particle. They speak of their difficulties and their intricacies, their pleasures, their high enjoyments, their disappointments, their raptures, the time they spend over it, with delight—the Christian professor, a dumb dog that dare not name his Master. Christ is wounded in the house of his friends.

If I go into the company of painters, they talk all the time about painting : where they have been, what they have seen, what they have on hand, what intercourse they have had with fellow artists, and they glow over the subject, their hearts warm, their eyes dilate, their cheeks flush with noble pride. Whoever hears Jesus Christ referred to? I seldom do, and the answer is that it is too sacred a subject to be talked about. O, but the devil is cunning : he says, "Do not mention God, the subject is *too sacred* : do not refer to Christian experience and Christian service, because the subject is *too holy*." You have only to make a subject *grand* enough to have it utterly ignored ! I love to hear you, young people talk about your artistic studies, your musical studies, your literary studies, and to speak of your teachers and masters and helpers : it is inspiring, it is like breathing a sea-breeze to hear you

talk ; I would the Christian professors could learn something from you ! If their Master were *less*, they would say more about him—so they seem to suggest. Two musical people will not be five minutes together before they are in the very midst of their subject ; we shall all disperse after public worship and probably not a soul refer to the exercises in which we have been engaged.

How will Christ treat the doubter or the inquirer ? He will be harsh with him ? I never knew him harsh except with the persons who claimed infallibility, ancestral righteousness, and authority in things of which they knew nothing. He will rebuke John ? I never knew him send a rebuke to a prison in which lay any poor soul suffering for Christ's sake. He will send a blessing ? Yes, that would be like him, wholly, so he says, "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." He might have said, "Cursed is he who doubts about me, blameable is he who asks a question that suggests a wonder or a difficulty." Christ knew what we call the art of putting things. You may send a cruel message or a kind one, all by turning the sentence and setting it in its right relation—"And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me, who shall wait for the revelation, who shall submit himself to the training and discipline of God, who shall accept God's way of doing things, how mysterious soever it be ; for that man there is reserved a whole summer of benediction and affluence redundant, after the pattern of God's love in all his universe." Sometimes we must show our Christian confidence by patiently waiting, and at all times we must show our Christian confidence in trusting a man where we cannot explain the process of his action.

Jesus proceeds to speak about John. One wonders how so great a Speaker as Jesus will speak about any human creature. He speaks about John in noble terms, his eulogium seems to fill the sky, there is no word too good to be spent upon the character of this modern Elias. First of all he proceeds to correct the notions of his time concerning John. "What went ye out for to see ? A reed shaken with the wind, a man clothed in soft raiment, a prophet ?" This is the transition through which every honest man passes when he comes into new social conditions. No minister can arise to-day who should be enabled by the Lord to do anything, who would not pass through precisely these three

periods of criticism, unless he died under one of the first two, and never came to his due recognition. Thus, a reed shaken with the wind, a nine days' wonder, a little fluttering thing in the air, here and gone—that is the first criticism that is passed on any great reformer or noble teacher or self-sacrificing soul. A man clothed in softs, literally, that is the next criticism; he is working for himself, he is doing it all with a purpose, he is trying to make his bed soft, his house rich, his position strong: he has an aim in all this. Time rolls on, and they begin reluctantly to say, "He is a prophet." They can turn round as completely as that. The newspapers can—the French newspapers did so about Napoleon: he was a thief, he was a Corsican, he was a pretender—and the next day he was the emperor. That is a very small miracle in the way of a newspaper, for men sometimes grow rapidly under journalistic influences. Walk on, persevere, hold the plough-handle with all thy force; keep at it, John the Baptist, and thou wilt pass the period of being a reed, a man clothed in soft clothing—thou shalt be a prophet, and a voice shall say, "Yea, and more than a prophet, a flower with a fragrance, a sun with a halo, a prophet *plus*." That is so with every one of you, great and small, speakers and hearers, public men and private men; in proportion as you are honest and true, real and reformative in your spirit, you must be a reed, a self-seeker, a prophet.

Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, is, happily for himself, dead. In his day he was a heretic and a latitudinarian and a dangerous person. He speaks bitterly in his letters and in his sermons, and to-day he is worshipped and loved and honoured, and men call their first-born sons Arnold, after the king of Rugby. A prophet? Yea, I say unto you and more than a prophet. It is a long tunnel, but at the other end of it is the warm, genial, hospitable summer. God give thee strength, patience, and courage!

Jesus Christ, in indicating the greatness of John the Baptist, shows that the revelation with which he was entrusted culminated and died in his personal ministry. "Notwithstanding," Christ adds, "he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." Life is a series of kingdoms; in my Father's house are many mansions; all things move in circles, there are no straight lines except within given and compassable points—even straight

lines themselves are running on into circles ; if we could project the vision far enough, we should see where the straight line begins to take the form of the globe whereon it is drawn. So John completes his revelation, and those who are in the kingdom of heaven in the higher revelation are, even the very least of them, greater than he.

Then Jesus Christ takes an opportunity of discoursing upon himself and upon John. He said, "John came neither eating nor drinking, and the people say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Every ministry has been rejected, the ascetic ministry, the genial ministry—each has in turn been despised and rejected of men. You cannot please men who are determined not to be pleased. Men will not look over the fogwall of their prejudices. Here is a minister who will please you ; he neither eats nor drinks—what is your judgment? "He hath a devil." Here is a genial man, he comes eating and drinking—what say you? "A gluttonous man and a winebibber." The truth is, you do not *want* the minister. I speak now to those whose hearts are of stone, whose will is marked by invincible obduracy. Will they stick at anything in their road? Not they. He has a devil—take away his character. He is a gluttonous man and a winebibber—take away his character. There is nothing too bad for the bad man to do. He would uncrown the monarch and set fire to the throne, he would assault the reputation of angels rather than fail of his malignant purpose.

Blessed Saviour, this is thy defence of thy servant. O what shielding! O what gentle protection, what ample security, what noble eulogium! He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. If we try to serve him, though our dispensation be brief and small, he will recognise our efforts, and no eulogy shall be so sweet and so full of satisfaction as his will be. Is he your Master, is he mine? do I love his name? do I abide by his cross? do I imbibe his spirit? do I display his love? Then, though some may say we have a devil and are mad, he will come with the explanation, he will vindicate every servant of his, and their enemies will he clothe with shame, and upon themselves shall the crown of his favour flourish.

Matthew xi. 20-24.

20. Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works (unrecorded miracles) were done, because they repented not :

21. Woe unto thee, Chorazin (or town of Galilee, two miles from Capernaum), woe unto thee, Bethsaida (the birthplace of Peter, Andrew, and Philip): for if the mighty works which were done in you (chastised by Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander) had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

23. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven (as the frequent residence of Christ), shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom at the day of judgment, than for thee.

SEEKING FRUIT AND FINDING NONE.

THIS is a new tone in the voice of Jesus Christ. All that has yet come out of him has been an utterance of love and hope and hospitality, great offers of healing and peace and joy. Now comes the tone of reproach. It must come sooner or later in all human training. Every man who is deeply interested in the race has had occasion to utter a keen voice of reproach at some period of his generous toil. It is important to observe that in this instance the reproach is founded upon absolute reasonableness. It is not petulance; it is the result of labour not misapplied, but unworthily received. And we are accustomed amongst ourselves to utter reproach under precisely the same circumstances.

How do you address the boy upon whom you have lavished all your care; upon whom you have spent a fortune, little or great; whose well-being has been the one object of your desire; for whom you would gladly have suffered the loss of all things that he might be wise and good and useful; and who, when everything has been done for him human love could devise and human sacrifice provide, has turned out ungrateful, unfilial, a disappointment,

a wreck? Is it possible for you to look on with complacency? Do you feel no pang of the heart as you look upon the result of all your prayer and toil and care? What if there break from the tongue of the most patient some bitter cry of regret, some tone of parental disappointment—would it be unreasonable? Its pathos would be in its reasonableness.

You speak of the land you toil upon, and on which you bestow money and labour and care, and which does not reward your industry, in almost anger and contempt. You look for results; you have a right to do so; you have laboured, and you say where is the produce? Yet the land will drink up all you pour upon it, eat it, and be as lean as ever; and if you visit that land with a judgment of condemnation you are acting reasonably in so doing.

These illustrations may help us to understand in some degree the pathos of this reproach, the bitterness of this cry, and the more so because the object of Jesus Christ in all his labour is distinctly laid down here. The reason given is, Because they repented not. It was not petulance on the part of Christ; there was no tone of merely personal disappointment; it seemed as if he had made the cities worse rather than better; it seemed as if they would have been better if they had never seen him, for having seen him, they rejected him with despite and contempt. Surely it would have been better for some of us if we had never heard of Christ. No man can hear of Christ and be just the same after hearing concerning him and his gospel as before hearing the revelation of his person and ministry. The gospel makes a man better or it makes him worse; it is a savour of life unto life or of death unto death. No man is the same after church as he was before church; the prayer is an event in his history; any offer of divine mercy, any display of divine love, is a crisis in the man's personal history, and if he accept not the offer that was made, it were better for him that the offer had never been presented to his attention.

We may no longer then doubt the one purpose of Christ in working his miracles. The object which Christ had in view in working miracles was to bring men to repentance. He upbraided the cities that had seen his mighty works because they repented not, the argument being that the miracles were wrought for the purpose of bringing the people to repentance, and that object

having failed, the whole purpose of Christ came to nothing. They were not wrought to startle, to please, to amuse, or to gratify curiosity, but to bring the heart to contrition; they were assaults upon unbelief, they were appeals to obduracy, they were so many forms and methods of gospel preaching.

The miracles will be a continual stumbling-block to us if we do not seize this view of them. Regarded by themselves, they stun the mind and excite many eager questions, but placed in their right atmosphere and read in the high light of their generous purpose, the miracles are but the emphasis with which divine messages were delivered. No miracle is to be torn out of its setting, wrenched away from its proper atmosphere, and judged as a thing complete in itself. Every miracle belongs to something else, and if you do not bring that something else within your purview, and add that in the consummation of your argument, you will miss the whole purpose and meaning of Christ's miracles. Yet this is how the miracles have been treated. They have been taken out one by one, brought away from their natural atmosphere and proper surroundings, and each has been judged as a thing that had no relation to anything else. Now Jesus Christ adds, in one utterance of reproach, the miracles to a grand moral purpose. He upbraided the cities, and cried in terms of bitter reproach because the miracles had not produced *repentance*. They might have excited the cities to applause, roused the cities to admiration and delight, as mere feats of power; Christ would not have found, in such external enthusiasm, the result of his purpose.

Understand therefore, in reading the miracles, that every one of them has a *moral issue* in view in the scheme and providence of God, and we must not detach the miracle from the moral and beneficent purpose which God had in view in working that wonder in the sight of Man. Take the Incarnation of our Lord himself. As a mere incident in human history, it is incredible. But the Incarnation of our Lord is never set before us as a mere incident in human history. It is not an anecdote complete in itself, it brings up the ages with it, it sums infinite processes into one grand manifestation. As a divine method of coming into the race, it was from the point of reason the only method of approaching the

solemn work which was to be done. Given, God's purpose to manifest himself unto the world in visible form, and the gospel method of incarnation was not only the best possible, but the only possible method. I wish we had the opportunity of working out that theorem to its fullest issues. It needs to be stated over and over again until men become perfectly familiar with its terms. Not only was the Incarnation of our Lord the best possible method of coming into the human race, but the only method of doing so. And this I undertake to show on the ground of natural reason itself.

God could not come into any common man as he came into Christ without first destroying that man's identity, altering the centre and the weight of that man's responsibility, and placing that man in a totally false relation to every other member of the human race. The Incarnation of God in Christ exactly as it is stated in the gospel alone fills my imagination and satisfies my reason in its sternest mood. It would have amounted, had God come into any common man as he came into Christ, to an invidiousness which would have insulted every intelligent creature, and would have set up a perpetual irritation in every process of moral reasoning. He chose one of ourselves, and out of the lips of that elect man he rebuked every one of us. Why did he not choose every one of us, why did he not come a million strong, why not incarnate himself in *every* creature that bore his image? He incarnated himself in one common man, picked up one of ourselves, dwelt in all the fulness of his deity in him bodily. Why did he not repeat the miracle according to the number of millions of human creatures upon the earth, and then the whole work would have been done? But to tell me that he incarnated himself in a creature precisely of my own kind and standing precisely on a level with myself, and then left me out and spoke to me through the man whom he had thus made his own tabernacle, insults my reason, annoys my sense of justice, fills me with contempt. But take the gospel method, coming as Christ came into the world, begotten by the Holy Ghost, conceived of the Virgin Mary, made like unto us yet without sin, and it becomes a mystery indeed, but a mystery before which our reason uncovers its head and bows down in lowly wonder and worship. As it is, I can say, Great is

the *mystery* of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, but upon any other theory I should say, Great is the *injustice* of godliness; a common man is chosen and purified as a vessel of God, whilst other men are left to be touched and moved by his inferior ministry.

Do not detach the miracles from their atmosphere, above all things do not create any space between the miracle and its *moral purpose*; the moral purpose of every miracle was to bring men to consideration, to spiritual softening, to individual repentance, and it is through that moral purpose that the whole scheme of the miracles must be viewed and estimated.

Jesus Christ tells us that judgment is to be in proportion to opportunities. Tyre and Sidon will not have to answer for more than their own advantages. But this law, so simple and so just, adds to the gravity of living now. If we grow in responsibility as we grow in age, what arithmetician in all this house shall add up the sum of our obligation? He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace? It is an awful thing to live now. We live longer than Methuselah lived; we are astounded by patriarchal statistics as to human age, but there is not a child living who has not lived longer than Methuselah lived. We live longer in a week than Methuselah lived in a century; his age was but a span to ours; everything is made ready to our hands, the whole world is now a grand machine for the instantaneous doing of things; there is nothing more possible in our case. If I were called upon to say what more could be done I should be at an utter loss to reply.

What more could be done in your case? Let me for a moment ask, individualising any one of you. Tell me wherein you have been neglected. Have you heard every variety of human voice, have you heard the son of thunder and the son of consolation, have you the open Scripture in your house, written in your mother-tongue, is not the air full of sacred ministry, in every street is there not a sanctuary throwing open its hospitable doors and inviting you to its hospitable refreshment? Have you not been reared in

a Christian home, taught the prayers that Jesus breathed, have you not been prayed over, cared for, watched, written to in many a tender motherly epistle, spoken to, and had the advantage of much fatherly counsel? Have not your friends gathered round you and bidden you welcome to some higher life and nobler purpose—what more can be done? What if the next voice shall rend the air and a bitter wail of reproach shall fall upon your ear, God's own upbraiding, because you have returned to him the prophets and minstrels, the holy books, the cross, his son, the Holy Ghost, as unequal to the breaking up of the obduracy of your selfishness and the fortification of your selfish will. If you were to ask me what more could be done I should be, I repeat, at a loss to reply; you have heard the thunder, seen the light, listened to the music, had an opportunity of entering the open door of hope—a thousand new chances have come to you and offered you new light, to every one of these appeals and opportunities you have returned a sullen No, a selfish denial, and God has nothing else. He said, "I will send my Son, they will reverence my Son, they will see me in my Son," and we have taken his Son and stoned him and slain him and have bound our oaths with his sacred name. O the tragedy, O the awfulness beyond all human speech! It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for us, if we have refused the gracious offers of God.

To me there is a glowing and final proof of the eternal truthfulness of Christ in the fact that he never concealed his own failures. No impostor can afford to make the worst of his case. Impostors magnify their successes; through one success impostors try to force their way to others. Impostors live in grand reports, they publish their statistics to an admiring world—they never tell you of their failures. Truth alone loves truth. Jesus Christ never gave us a coloured picture of the successes of his ministry. He did not hide his disappointment, he did not tell the disciples round about him that Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were much better than they looked, and there were instances of encouragement and germs of promise, and he did not tell three of the disciples that they themselves came out of the very Bethsaida on which they were looking. No, he was true, he spoke the truth, he confessed the terrific tragedy of his soul's disappointment. "And when he came near the city he wept over it, and

said, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not. Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." "We will not have this man to reign over us," say you. He upbraided the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not.

You will always find Christ consistent with his own truthfulness. He has nothing to colour, pervert, distort, tinge with glowing tints, in order that he may win further support. He says, "I have laboured and I have reaped nothing. I have toiled and my labour has been my only reward. I came unto my own, and my own received me not." There is a ring of solemn truthfulness in all these declarations. Impostors would have seen the glitter and called it gold. Christ saw the failure, and upbraided those who had caused his ministry to return to himself as a bitter disappointment.

But this question arises: Is it possible for Jesus Christ to have come into any city and to have preached the gospel, and to have shown his mighty works, and yet for that city not to repent? Let me tell you that we have too many analogies in our own common life to allow us to doubt of that possibility for one moment. Some of us have sinned away the very highest advantages of secular life. Here is a man of the highest education; he has passed through a university career and brought out after him all the prizes the university could offer. He is adorned at every point, the very ripest specimen of the most modern culture, so far as his intelligence is concerned. It would be impossible for that man to do the dishonourable deed, to speak the dishonourable word, to play falsely, to be guilty of malfeasance; he will be true, upright, noble, pure, beautiful as a beam of light. Not *necessarily* so. We have known such men use their intelligence as an increased facility for doing mischief.

Here is a man surrounded by all that art can do for the adornment and the enlivenment of his home, every panel a picture, every window a hint of beauty, the whole surrounding a triumph of the highest art. As the man sits there, his thoughts will correspond with his surroundings. He will say, "It will be impossible in this sanctuary of beauty to be other than beautiful myself; my souls sings in this palace of colour, and my heart is at ease amid

all this harmony of architectural and artistic relationships. There can be no unrest here ; all the lines fall into one another ; all the colours hold sweet fellowship ; the whole house is all but alive ; it will be a sacred place." Not necessarily. In that palace of beauty plots of iniquity may be hatched ; under that fair ceiling sin may perpetrate its most cunning victory ; amid all that beauty there may be a moral hideousness which may make the angels weep. The life of that man may be a daily insult to every soft colour, to all the blended lights and shadows, and to the very genius of the sanctuary of art and loveliness. In many a humble cot, in many a lowly home, with hardly a little engraving in it, you will find a moral loveliness which would turn that debased palace into a scene of ghastliest hideousness.

Yes, it is possible to sin away music, beauty, love, life, light ; possible to sin away all the ministry of wife, child, friend, picture, and all that makes life deep, solemn, lovely. If it be so, then it is but a step to the other possibility of sinning Christ out of the life, urging him away, rebuking him and bidding him depart out of the region of our thought and love. My friend, I know of no ghastlier sight than grand external exaltation associated with moral perversity and putridity. Men would be shocked if they found under royal purple and regalia a skeleton propped up at the feast, with a foaming glass fastened in its bony and icy fingers. That would drive them mad ; that would be intolerable irony ; yet that is a commonplace in the moral world. If you could go into the banqueting-house, and sit down next the royal purple, and feel your face flushing with pride because of the association, and could then turn round and see that under the purple there was a dead carcass, you would never forget the sight, and you would refer to it as the most tragic of your experiences. You would shudder in horror every time you recalled the instance. My friends, 'tis nothing—a gibe, a joke, a thing to laugh at, compared with the *moral* skeletons that are around the table of the world every day. Fine coats do not make fine characters ; fine houses do not always mean splendid tenants ; the basest metal may have a covering of gold. I wonder not that Jesus Christ, looking upon some men, said, "Whited sepulchres, full of dead men's bones, and men walk over them, and are not aware of them." It required his eye, the eye in which is the light that shall make the glory of the resurrec-

tion morning, to see those whited sepulchres, and count those dead men's bones.

He sees us as we are; he conceals nothing of the ghastly reality; he prophesies no smooth things to sinners that are living lies. Thank God for the truthfulness of Christ. If you want to know what you are, go to him; he makes no false reading of character; he makes no miscalculation of human force and value; he is the one character that tests every other living man. O that upbraiding face, may we never see it! O that upbraiding voice, may we never hear it! Every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him shall look upon him and mourn, and shall call to the rocks and to the mountains, saying, "Fall on us and hide us from the face and the wrath of the Lamb."

I have seen faces so laden with sorrow that to look upon them was to feel an intolerable burden of self-accusation resting upon and distressing the soul, without a word spoken, just as your mother looked when, after a thousand prayers, you came home—a wreck. She said, "Speech is useless; I have spoken, and my throat is sore." But O the look, the reddened eyes, the wet eyelids, the swollen face, the trembling lips, the whole look! It said, "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is, to have a thankless child." And the old man, as he looked up off his book, and saw you, said nothing; but his eyes were judgment, his glance was hell.

O that upbraiding face, O that upbraiding voice—may they never come within our experience!

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